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# An Ethnographic Study of Kindergarten Children's Literacy Skills and Stress-Related Behaviors Before and After Teacher Demonstration.

Nancy Crossland Weems

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**Weems, Nancy Crossland, Ph.D.**

**The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical Col., 1991**

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN'S  
LITERACY SKILLS AND STRESS RELATED BEHAVIORS BEFORE  
AND AFTER TEACHER DEMONSTRATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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May, 1991

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## Abstract

The purpose of this ethnographic research was to study kindergarten students' literacy skills and stress-related behaviors and a teacher's instructional behavior before and after teacher demonstrations in appropriate bookreading strategies. A lower socio-economic setting, which previously had been identified by Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, and Kirk (1990a) as a developmentally inappropriate instructional environment, was selected for observation as one which might be amenable to change. The teacher demonstrations included bookreading strategies and adult-child interactions around print that the kindergarten teacher could implement to promote the acquisition of literacy in ways that do not contribute to a stressful environment.

Ethnographic data collection consisted of three months of participant observation in one kindergarten classroom. The observation was conducted before, during, and after teacher demonstrations in appropriate bookreading strategies. These strategies included interacting with children about the meaning of print as

opposed to drilling on isolated skills that results in rote memorization.

The foundation of this ethnography was the richly descriptive field notes gained from long-term fieldwork. Analysis of the field notes was inductive in that the recurring patterns emerged out of the data rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection and analysis. Using a coding procedure, two other judges represented their observations of behavior. Additionally, interviews and researcher-designed instruments were used to triangulate the data collected in the form of field notes.

The study was conducted in a school located in a metropolitan area of approximately 450,000 people. The kindergarten population in this study consisted of a Black female teacher, age 55, and twelve black children, six boys and six girls ranging in age from 4.10 to 6.2 years.

The findings of this study are threefold: First, by providing a descriptive account of classroom behavior in the context of literacy acquisition, this study offers an in-depth portrayal of how children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, where stressors exist

both in and outside the home, acquire literacy skills. Second, it suggests that children from such backgrounds progress rapidly in acquiring literacy skills when taught in developmentally appropriate ways and that teachers adopt appropriate bookreading strategies when involved in the planning. Third, the study indicates that a decrease in the frequency of the children's classroom stress behaviors may occur during bookreading.

## CHAPTER I

### OVERVIEW

#### Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research was to conduct an ethnographic study of kindergarten students' literacy skills and stress-related behaviors and a teacher's instructional behavior before and after teacher demonstrations in appropriate bookreading strategies. To understand the literacy problems experienced in our elementary school system today, I observed and evaluated the development of literacy skills in a lower socio-economic Black setting in a school serving a low socio-economic Black population. Prior to the present study, another kindergarten classroom in the school had been identified by researchers Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, and Kirk (1990a) as an instructional environment which was, in developmental terms, inappropriate. Stress behaviors were observed with more frequency among kindergarten students in this setting than in more developmentally appropriate settings. Therefore, the teacher demonstrations in the present study included bookreading strategies that all kindergarten teachers in the school could implement to

promote the acquisition of literacy in ways that do not contribute to a stressful environment.

Ethnography was selected as the method of this study because a background in counseling directed me into a methodology of developing case studies that looked in depth at subjects identified for study. This method had proved enlightening in previous research that I had conducted. In previous stress research, quantitative data were collected through scan sampling procedures (Burts et al., 1990a; Burts, Hart, Charlesworth, Fleege, Mosley & Thomasson, 1990b), while qualitative methods were used more frequently in book-reading and other early literacy research (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 1985; Heath, 1983; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon, 1989). While the quantitative research, cited above, generated factual information about stress-related behaviors displayed among children in inappropriate instructional settings, in-depth observation was needed to plan an effective intervention.

#### Ethnography and its Implications

Ethnography is the search to understand, that is, to describe cultures, usually different from our own

(Spradley, 1980). Identifying patterns of social interactions and behaviors of the subjects under study is the key to the ethnographer's search for understanding.

For this particular study, the concept of context was important. Since this ethnography included the immediate physical and verbal environment of the subjects under study, a rich context was provided to study the literacy process in action. The ethnography also included the significance of the literacy events for those who participated in the events. That is, ways of hearing words read by the storyreader were socially organized by the children. In Heath's (1983) ethnographic research, storyreading was an event relatively unfamiliar to Black preschoolers of low socio-economic status. The children in Heath's study, as well as the children in the present study, had to take knowledge gained from other experiences outside of classroom storyreading to make sense of the school bookreading event. Therefore, ethnographic research extended my base of knowledge concerning these children's early literacy experiences.

It is important to note that this study is styled in the first person, since I, a contemporary ethnographer, believe that to understand a setting, one must become part of that setting and be actively involved (Patton, 1980). Social scientists in the past wrote about cultures in a distanced voice. They described and interpreted behaviors and customs as they saw them through perfectly objective lens (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). These researchers contend that the contemporary ethnographer should not be behind the lens but actively involved. As the ethnographer listens to what others say and participates in others' activities, his or her voice is reflective of the total participant-observation experience. "With the fieldwork account, the rhetoric of experienced objectivity yields to that of the autobiography... . The ethnographer...is at center stage" (p. 14).

The ethnographic data for the present study was collected over a three-month period in three phases: a three-week observation period, a six-week teacher demonstration period, and a three-week observation period. Although I provided teacher demonstrations for three kindergarten teachers in the kindergarten

setting, I conducted an in-depth study of one class only. This class, consisting of one Black female teacher (age fifty-five) and twelve low socio-economic Black children (ages four to six), was regularly observed five mornings a week for a two-hour period during language arts activities.

Thus, the findings reported in this study resulted from an analysis of observations made during the instructional period. Literacy and stress-related behaviors displayed on the playground or at home were not observed.

#### Rationale and Contribution

This particular study is unique in that it is one of the few, if not the first, to follow a literacy teacher demonstration training program into the classroom and study its effects in depth. A successful staff development program designed by Zacchei and Loucks (1983) had at its core a comprehensive training program including orientation sessions, in-class coaching, and follow-up assistance. I was able to provide for the teachers a comprehensive training program including planning sessions, in-class coaching, and follow-up sessions to evaluate what we had done. I



was able to provide intensive training for one teacher. Since I was in her classroom every day, I was available to model instructional techniques, provide resources when needed, discuss problems when they arose, and to communicate success. Because of the ethnographic nature of my study, nurturance of this kind was possible.

The demonstrations were done with students in another kindergarten classroom with the target teacher as an observer. When I returned to the classroom that I was observing, I could then observe any changes in the target teacher's and students' behaviors.

The bookreading techniques modeled in the teacher demonstrations focused on the gradual socialization of literacy skills rather than the direct drilling of skills. According to Elkind (1986), the direct drilling of skills is an example of rote learning which provides the child with little opportunity for reasoning. "The pressure to focus on one avenue of learning, such as [single] letter or word identification, is very stressful for young children" (p. 635) because children learn individually different things at different rates. The research by Burts et

al. (1990a, 1990b) supported Elkind's assertion. The researchers found that appropriate practices which afforded children choices to engage in concrete learning experiences, such as learning centers, were less stressful than inappropriate practices that included direct teaching of skills and the use of workbooks and worksheets, which often had to be completed within an inflexible time period. The more appropriate, less stressful classrooms also included significantly more storybook reading than observed in the classrooms with more inappropriate practices.

Through storyreading, the teacher can direct the child's attention to print without drilling on an isolated letter or the sound of that letter. Using storybooks, the teacher can interact with the child about the meaning of print (i.e., how the text relates to the child's life and what the author's message is), rather than using worksheets to drill on specific skills.

I anticipated the possibility that the results of the teacher demonstrations, if appropriately adopted by the teachers, would not only expose the children to literacy skills in less stressful ways but bring the

children to a higher level of literacy development. This level of literacy would be evidenced in their classroom behavior as they were enabled to learn more easily in the classroom setting. Schweinhart, Berrueta-Clement, Barnett, Epstein, and Weikart (1985) and Heath (1983) stated that if intervention can occur at the preschool or kindergarten age, the potential for development of literacy skills necessary for economic and social advancement is excellent, in contrast to attempting remediation for children later in their academic learning.

It has been documented by the newly-established Louisiana Literacy Council that adult illiteracy in our state is the highest in the nation. One approach to the solution to the illiteracy problem could be through providing developmentally appropriate literacy instruction at an early age with children who are beginning their formal education. Teachers who do not know how to provide this experience might benefit from demonstrations of developmentally appropriate literacy techniques that could be used in their classrooms. This study examined what happened when such demonstrations were provided.

### The Sunshine Project

The present study grew out of the researcher's experience as director of a bookreading project for parents and their children, ages four to seven. This project was located in a school serving a lower socio-economic population in Sunshine, a small town in South Louisiana. The student population was made up of children from Black lower-class families while the faculty was mostly White and middle-class. Since Heath's (1982, 1983) research focused on a similar population, I was able to utilize her research and to design a bookreading model for the parents of Sunshine and their children.

In a longitudinal study of Trackton, a working-class Black community, Heath (1983) revealed that Trackton parents did not read to their children. They included them in storytelling events but not for teaching purposes. As a result, traditional questions White middle-class teachers asked from books were unfamiliar to the Trackton children. The purpose of the Sunshine project was to find out if Black lower socio-economic parents, when shown, would participate in meaningful bookreading interactions with their

children. Appropriate bookreading strategies were modeled for these parents. In the present study, similar techniques were modeled for kindergarten teachers.

Since the teachers in the present study were more advanced in their literacy skills than the parents in the Sunshine study, I was able to provide the teachers with a more comprehensive training program. For example, the parents in Sunshine were shown how to ask questions and to vary their voice to involve their children in the story. Teachers in the present study were shown extension activities requiring child involvement, such as writing words and groups of words on story charts and ultimately converting the charts into class books.

Thus, the present study provided an additional opportunity to work with children at the same age-level and from a similar background but utilized a teacher-student relationship rather than direct parental involvement. The design of the present study yielded another perspective from which to draw conclusions about the contribution of bookreading to young children's literacy development.

This ethnography examined three areas: children's literacy development before, during, and after demonstrations in storybook reading techniques; children's display of stress-related behaviors in relation to the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the instructional technique; and the teacher's instructional behavior before and after the teacher demonstrations. The effect of the instructional behavior on student behavior before and after the demonstrations also was examined. Additionally, this study was conducted with the supervision and on-site participation of Dr. Miles Richardson of the Department of Geography and Anthropology and Dr. Rosalind Charlesworth, early childhood specialist in the College of Education.

#### Conceptual Framework

Research and classroom experience tell us that the education of young children differs from that of adults and from older children. Supporting this statement is the writing of leading authorities and pioneers of child study such as Piaget, Elkind, Vygotsky, Gesell, Montessori, and Ferreiro. Ferreiro, who studied emerging literacy, endorses Piaget's concept of

constructivism. Constructivism views the crux of early education as allowing children to learn according to their own biological rates and to grow and construct their own knowledge from the environment with appropriate materials and guidance. This concept of allowing children to grow, as opposed to making them ready, has short- and long-term effects related to stress. Elkind (1986) has described the short-term effects of stress including symptoms such as headache and fatigue and the long-term effects of stress including low self-esteem and the inability to act on one's own initiative (i.e., too much adult intervention impairs the self-directed learning of young children and creates a dependency on adult direction and an insecurity in the children's capabilities). According to Elkind (1986), young children exposed to teacher-driven instruction frequently display the short-term effects of stress. He also noted that prolonged exposure to stress or an increase in stressors can cause long-term effects.

Charlesworth (1985) has stated that if children are allowed to develop according to their own biological rates through a low-stress environment rich

in materials and with appropriate guidance, then children will learn at the fastest rates possible for them. Their resultant success will motivate them to learn more. Charlesworth has suggested that implementing developmentally appropriate instructional practices for educating young children may provide a foundation for learning.

Ferreiro (1986) has emphasized that the link between oral language and print is not immediately grasped by any child. "Even those that grow up in an environment rich in literacy experiences...have considerable trouble understanding the relationship between oral language and the graphic forms" (p. 16). According to Ferreiro, the link between print and oral language is gradually built by the child as he or she uses processes that are developmentally ordered. Literacy development no doubt takes place in a social environment, and social practices, as well as social information, are received actively by children. When children try to understand, they transform the content received. This transformation is an active process and the meaning of Piaget's (1974) theory of assimilation and accomodation. That is, the young child innately



knows how to go about acting to obtain knowledge and thus constructs the appropriate schema when developmentally ready. However, the child may experience difficulty in accommodating for the meaning of information if it conflicts with his or her prior knowledge.

In explaining these conflicts, Ferreiro (1986) described a kindergarten student, Mariana, who reads workbooks according to the idea common to most children: What is written is the name without the article. So, in the workbook "the polar bear" only says "bear" to Mariana. This conflict is a typical example of distorted assimilation, to use the classical Piagetian terminology. Young children tend to distort the text to fit their own preexisting notions. They cannot yet alter their ideas to assimilate the new information. The distance between the available information and their understanding is too great. Children at this stage are not able to understand, because accommodation is impossible when assimilation is not possible. According to Piaget (1974), children require guidance so that distortion does not occur or is minimized.

Vygotsky (1978) suggested that children require guidance in the form of language. That is, the child needs a communicator present to supply the necessary "scaffolding." Scaffolding, a term coined by Vygotsky, means that language is used as a form of support or guidance until understanding is reached. For example, in Mariana's workbook, an adult verbally labels the picture and the text until an association is made. Vygotsky supports the Piagetian concept of assimilation and accommodation but asserts that it is the language surrounding these events that results in the child's actual learning.

Thus, through bookreading, the storyreader can provide the necessary scaffolding or language to support the young child with the meaning of print. According to Vygotsky (1978), if a child is unsure of the meaning of a word, he or she is in a zone of proximal development, and the relationship between the child and the adult (storyreader) is an interpsychological relationship. Once the child understands the meaning, he or she moves out of this zone, and the relationship becomes intrapsychological. In other words, the child has internalized the meaning

of the word, and the adult assistance is no longer needed.

Thus, in Mariana's school, the workbook is trying to teach one thing, and Mariana is learning another (Ferreiro, 1986). According to Ferreiro, the school personnel are making the same assumption that Mariana, like any other child, can learn immediately that "written texts are related to the utterance in a very precise manner" (p. 41).

Like "throwing" money for temporary solutions, Kamii (1985) has stated that although it is common sense for administrators to "throw" more workbooks and worksheets at children, these highly structured materials do not really help. Children who are successful completing workbook pages and worksheets already know how to do them and do not learn concepts by completing them; and those who cannot complete worksheets, on the other hand, will not learn concepts by completing workbooks. Children construct concepts through their own thinking as they work with appropriate materials and guidance.

A dynamic of development, then, is that each child learns at his or her individual rate. When adults

disrupt a child's learning, they also interfere with the process of learning. According to Charlesworth (1985), a child can be responsible for his or her own learning if provided with appropriate guidance. If the proper techniques are utilized in guiding young children toward reading, then perhaps a sound foundation for future learning can be provided. Guidance through storybook reading can create an awareness of print without the force-feeding of formal instruction and the use of highly structured materials such as worksheets which, according to the Burts et al. study (1990a,b) have been found to be stressful for young children.

Spontaneously segmenting print from pictures, recognizing letters and words, using text language in situations other than the bookreading event, and recognizing words out of context are some of the literacy skills that can grow out of bookreading. It follows, then, that supporting the child through low-stress experiences such as bookreading is important in helping the young reader make the connection between oral language and its graphic representation.

### Contributions of Heath's Research

As my study progressed, Heath's (1983) study of Trackton became increasingly relevant. I wondered why more researchers did not study children's learning of language as children grew up in their own communities. Heath's work recorded the natural flow of community and classroom life over nearly a decade and particularly concentrated on an all-Black lower socio-economic community called Trackton. The cultural and social environment of Trackton children closely resembled the participants in my study.

Another phase of Heath's fieldwork was done in the working-class, all-White community of Roadville. Therefore, comparative data were collected and analyzed. Heath's comparisons between the Trackton children and the Roadville children were particularly relevant, since I had worked mostly with White middle-class students and now was working with Black students. From Heath's descriptions of both cultures, I could distinguish from among the similarities in Trackton and the differences in Roadville that existed in the kindergarten children I was studying.

Both of Heath's communities were located in the Piedmont area of the Carolinas. Her ethnographic account revealed how children from these two culturally different communities came to use language and how their teachers learned to understand the children's ways and adjusted their teaching habits to accomodate for the differences. For example, Heath reported that Trackton parents seldom asked questions of their young; they did not see their children as question-answerers. Therefore, questions in school were foreign to children from Trackton. Heath found that the White middle-class teachers were asking the traditional school questions, such as "Who was the main character in the story?" instead of first relating the story characters to the children's lives. For example, Lem, a Black preschooler in Heath's study, commented, "Teachers always askin' questions 'bout somethin' bein' about theirselves" (p. 216).

Parents wanted to know why students and teachers often could not understand each other. Therefore, a question that became critical in Heath's study was, "What were the effects of preschool home and community environments on the learning of language structures and

uses which were needed in the classroom?" Answers to this question were important for both the Black and White children who were unsuccessful in school.

Heath served as teacher-aide or co-teacher in the classrooms. Together, she and the teachers took field notes and identified patterns of communicative interactions. They searched for solutions; wrote curricula; and tried new methods, materials, and motivations to help the working-class Black and White children learn more effectively than they had in the past. Heath was trying to bridge a language barrier so that the communication between teacher and child was meaningful and as a result more learning took place. Heath's study was an intervention as was mine. I was trying to bridge a gap between appropriate and inappropriate instruction so that the learning of literacy skills could be improved and stress reduced.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

The areas to be reviewed include storybook reading, stress in early childhood, and demonstrations for teachers, the three areas upon which the study focuses. A major contribution of storybook reading to children's literacy development are that children imitate adults' modeling literacy-related behaviors. Teaching strategies through bookreading can be demonstrated effectively to teachers if teacher concerns are addressed. According to the literature reviewed, the major contributing factors in implementing successful teacher demonstrations are to identify the teacher's needs; to involve the support of the principal; and to structure the demonstrations to include orientation, planning, in-class coaching, and follow-up activities which include teacher participation and planning.

Stress in a young child's life is more difficult to research because of the wide variety of stimuli that may induce stress behavior. Social conditions that are sources of stress may be identified in a social setting such as the classroom.



### Storybook Reading

Cochran-Smith (1985); Heath (1982, 1983); Ninio and Bruner (1978); Roser and Martinez (1985); Snow and Goldfield (1983); Snow and Ninio (1986); and Yaden, Smolkin, and Conlon (1989) presented numerous examples of adults' modeling literacy-related behaviors, children's displaying literacy skills, and the use of language patterns and structures--all in the socially interactive context of storybook reading. Teale (1981) noted, based on research in the area, that "one issue that the various camps in the field [of reading] are in virtually unanimous agreement is that reading to preschool children is a good thing...children who have been read to have a special 'leg up' on becoming literate" (p. 905).

Correlational studies by Durkin (1966) indicated that reading to preschool children is positively related to eagerness to read and success in beginning reading. Harste, Woodward, and Burke (1984) observed that the more experiences preschool children have with books, the more successful they are in reading and writing in school. Of all the factors that influence

reading achievement, Wells (1985, 1986) found that being read to was the most beneficial.

Applebee and Langer (1983) observed that when children watch adults read, they learn what reading is and why it is done. After several rereadings, children developed an "ear" for book language and began to talk like a book (Clay, 1986). Holdaway (1979) emphasized that a child with a background of bookreading experiences has built in a set of models and has practiced them until the conversation is natural and familiar. This familiarity was what Ochs (1979) termed "chunking." That is, when a child heard a story over and over, he or she memorized portions or chunks of the text. The child was, then, able to attend to the language without reference to the immediate situation.

Snow and Goldfield (1983) noted that if what a child says about a picture is the same as what the storyreader has said about that same picture in the initial reading of the story, the child is learning to talk appropriately in that situation. They found that without access to predictable routinized situations, such as bookreading, the child would never put such a

strategy to use. The child is beginning to pick up adult utterances and using them in a "highly specific way" (p. 106).

Ninio and Bruner (1978) reported that the bookreading event becomes routinized and that a four-step routine is established: attention-getting, labeling and describing pictures, asking questions, and giving feedback. To get the child's attention, the mother previews the book with the child and relates items in the text to the child's life. In requesting a label or asking a question, the mother pauses and assists the child when necessary. In giving feedback, the mother's utterances are contingent upon the child's responses. As time goes on, the child's responses become more complete, and the mother expects more from the child. This type of contingency Snow (1983) referred to as semantic contingency, which is a literacy-related behavior and seems to be associated with early acquisition of literacy skills.

Cochran-Smith (1985) observed that the storyreader negotiates meaning between the text and the child's understanding of the text. It is impossible for the author to include all information that the reader may

need. Therefore, the storyreader acts as a broker between the author's intended meaning and the child's understanding. Roser and Martinez (1985) reported that the adult serves in the role of co-responder and informer/monitor. As co-responder, the adult recounts portions of the story, shares personal reactions, and invites the child to share his or her reactions. In the role of informer/monitor, the adult supplies information to broaden the child's story-related knowledge and monitors the child's understanding of the text by asking questions.

Yaden, Smolkin, and Conlon (1989) noted that much of early literacy research focuses on adults' comments made to children during bookreading rather than comments children make in response to bookreading. In studying children's responses to bookreading, these researchers found that the most frequently asked questions by the preschool child were about the story's pictures. The next most frequent inquiries were about meaning. Occurring less frequently were questions about form, that is, about sound-symbol relationships and letter names. In a study on the effect of one-to-one storyreading in a day-care setting, Morrow (1987)

found that children asked more questions about pictures and the story's meaning than they did about the form of print. Schickedanz (1986) proposed that after several rereadings of a story, children develop schemata for form. Cochran-Smith (1985) also observed that preschool children develop schemata for genre and story grammar, that is, the important components of the story's structure, over several readings.

In recent years, researchers have begun to look at bookreading interactions in lower socio-economic settings. Recognizing that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds have had limited experiences with books, Morrow (1987, 1988) suggested that aides and volunteers read to children one-on-one at school. Kindergarten students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been indirectly instructed in story grammar through carefully prepared discussion followed by practice in retelling (Morrow, 1987). Pellegrini and Galda (1982) reported that reenacting a story seemed to have a direct effect on the child's ability to retell a story. McCormick and Mason (1980-1982) reported that Little Books, containing few lines of print that focus on a single comical theme, increased

preschool children's interest in and knowledge about reading. In implementing a language and literature curriculum for a kindergarten program serving a low socio-economic population, Rasala (1989) used rhyming books, such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, to help young children acquire memory skills.

In an ethnographic study of a working-class Black community, Heath (1982, 1983) was concerned with the lack of cultural congruence between lower-class Black children and middle-class White teachers. The problem that Heath identified was that the teacher was using unfamiliar language terms, especially when it came to asking questions. Heath also observed that the parents of the Black children did not ask their young the same kinds of questions that were being asked of them at school. In fact, parents did not view their children as question-answerers at all.

Heath, in the same studies cited, observed that parents did not read to their children. In a similar-type study, Ward (1971) observed that lower-class Black children were not included in adult conversations. Heath (1983) noted that children began to pick up adult

utterances at about one year of age. However, adults paid no attention to the child's chatter. At two years of age, the child repeated the utterances and began to use language in a creative way. Although parents still did not view their young as appropriate conversational partners, the child's creativity with language allowed him or her to enter the conversation:

Way, Far, Now  
 Church bell ringin'  
 'Dey singin'  
 It ringin'  
 You hear it?  
 I hear it  
 Way, Far, Now

Lem, two years

(Heath, 1983, p. 261)

According to Heath, this formulaic pattern and repetitive structure was characteristic of the Black preschooler.

Tannen (1985), in discussing the relationship between oral and written discourse, observed that the characteristics found in oral discourse were also found in the writing of creative fiction. Ong (1982) stated

that since the Black culture had been primarily an oral culture for so long, its members relied on metaphorical language and imagery to aid in oral recall. Therefore, in a lower socio-economic Black culture, the creative language patterns of the preschool child perhaps could be utilized to teach written literacy skills.

After having reviewed the research on storybook reading, Teale (1984) concluded that it seems that children can learn to read and write without having been read to in the preschool years, but there is evidence that such experiences have a facilitative effect on literacy development. In other words, adults' modeling literacy-related behaviors and children's emulating these behaviors contribute to the development of literacy skills necessary for success in school, such as exchanging information, memorizing text language, understanding the story's meaning, and other literacy-specific skills.

Effective teaching strategies through bookreading, learning centers, and other activities that promote the acquisition of literacy skills apply to all children, regardless of socio-economic status. Additionally, some children display stress-related behaviors in



classroom settings where bookreading experiences and choice of activities are limited (Burts et al., 1990a, 1990b).

### Stress in Early Childhood

Stress is a natural part of human development (Honig, 1986). Selye (1982), considered by many to be the father of stress research, defined stress as "the nonspecific (that is, common) result of any demand upon the body, be the effect mental or somatic" (p. 7). Similarly, Lazarus (1977) noted that stress occurs when the demands on the person tax or exceed his or her adjustive resources. Lazarus (1966) partitioned models or theories of stress into three types: stimulus-oriented theories; response-oriented theories; and organism-oriented, or interactional, theories. In stimulus-oriented theories, stress is viewed as a potential residing "out there" in the environment. According to this approach, those aspects of the environment that are demanding for the individual impose stress upon the individual. Response-oriented theories define stress in a different way. It is the response of the individual to the events in the environment that is treated as the stress. Organism-

oriented or interactional theories of stress refer to the individual's cognitive appraisal of the stressor. That is, after appraising the stressor, the individual uses one or more coping strategies in an attempt to adjust to the situation.

Looking at these theories collectively, Lazarus (1966) used the word stress as "a generic term for the whole area of problems that includes the stimuli producing stress reactions, the reactions themselves, and the various intervening processes" (p. 27). Lazarus suggested considering the field of stress to include physiological, sociological, and psychological phenomena and related concepts.

A host of writers (Charlesworth, 1985; Elkind, 1986; Honig, 1986; O'Brien, 1988; Rutter, 1979; Selye, 1982; and Swick, 1987) have identified stimuli which can cause stress in early childhood. Honig identified such social-emotional stimuli as experiencing pain and poverty; living in a dangerous neighborhood; watching heavy doses of violent television; feeling unloved; or being a latch-key child (i.e., a child whose parents do not return home until dark). Rutter noted that fear, failure, or the threat of failure were stimuli

potentially stressful for children. Elkind (1986) and Charlesworth (1985) reported on the demands of formal schooling as contributing to young children's stress. O'Brien identified pressure to succeed and divorce of parents as stressful stimuli. Selye (1982) and Swick (1987) identified fatigue and physical illness as physical stimuli that can cause stress and possibly long-lasting harm.

Several writers have discussed the difficulties of researching stress because of the wide variety of stimuli that may induce stress. Haan (1982) has asserted that for stress researchers to obtain a clearer understanding of the origins of stress, identifications of stressors that transcend the laboratory situation are needed. In other words, researchers need to be conducting more in-depth observations of stressors in the natural setting. Otherwise research generates small facts but no insights. Haan suggested that our difficulties arise from the continued pretense that stress research is a science that concerns objective realities. To conceptualize and understand the whole person, we need to be "interested in the effects of environments that

lead people to feel trapped, helpless, and oppressed" (p. 260).

Pearlin (1982) also was concerned with identifying social conditions that served as sources of stress. In reaffirming the importance of laboratory-based work for the understanding of the physical manifestations of stress, Pearlin asserted that we are not likely to acquire knowledge about social sources of stress unless we move out of the laboratory and into the field. Thus, the classroom setting could be a situation where social conditions exist that lead to stress-related behaviors in children.

Today's young children are exposed to a multitude of stressors both in and outside the home (McCracken, 1986). Such exposure is true at upper as well as lower socio-economic levels (Brooks, 1990). McCracken found that children adapt to stress according to their personal capacities. Rutter (1979) noted that even in the worst of circumstances some children adapt to stress. However, Selye (1982) cautioned that exposure to multiple stressors eventually lowers the individual's feelings of self-worth and resistance to disease. Honig (1986) reported that if children have

to adapt to numerous stressors, low self-esteem may result which can cause the child to turn to undesirable activities for feelings of success. "If persons have experienced numerous, intense, or prolonged episodes of stress, their resistance will be reduced" (Haan, 1982, p. 202).

Differences in children's cognitive appraisal of stressors lead to marked differences in their reactions to stressors (Honig, 1986). Some children's psychological makeup or value system may cause them to perceive particular events as highly threatening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). However, some children may be stressed by threatening conditions and others may not (Pearlin, 1982).

Honig (1986) reported that some preschoolers can find coping mechanisms that may not depend on sophisticated cognitive skills. Such coping mechanisms include "tears, tantrums, and the ability to become absorbed in play with peers" (p. 52). Honig observed that children with internal control deal with stress in more positive ways than children with external control. That is, children with internal control are more likely to accept responsibility for their actions in contrast

to children who are externalizers. Garmezy, Masten, and Tellegen (1984) found that children who are externalizers are more likely to resort to aggressive acts, such as hitting and arguing, and to accuse others when they themselves misbehave. Thus, coping strategies to deal with stress can take the form of adaptive as well as maladaptive behaviors.

According to Burts et al. (1990a, 1990b), maladaptive coping strategies include not only aggressive acts such as fighting and threatening, but passive behaviors such as withdrawal, fatigue, and refusal to talk. These researchers also view as stress behaviors off-task activities in the classroom such as gazing or wandering aimlessly around the room; playing with clothing, the mouth, and/or hair; and the inappropriate use of talk and teacher-attention devices. (A classroom child stress behavior instrument is included in Appendix A.)

#### Factors Associated with Stress

Some of the factors associated with stress include inappropriate classroom instructional practice, economic status, race, gender, and family structure. These factors play a critical role in the

implementation of appropriate instructional classroom curriculum.

According to Burts et al. (1990a, 1990b), developmentally appropriate practice appears to be the approach that would produce a low-stress curriculum in the classroom. Burts et al. found that appropriate practices include more stories, learning centers, and other activities that meet the needs of individual children. Inappropriate practices were described as including almost exclusive use of direct teaching of skills, large group lessons, workbooks and worksheets, rote learning, and lack of opportunity to make choices.

Early childhood educators (Bredekamp, 1987; Charlesworth, 1985; Elkind, 1986; Kamii, 1985; and Swick, 1987) have called for an end to the use of inappropriate objectives, activities, and instructional materials and a return to appropriate methods and materials which allow children to "control their own knowledge through first-hand interaction with the environment" (Charlesworth, 1985, p. 26). According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987), teachers facilitate the social-emotional development of children by using

appropriate practices such as modeling expected behaviors and hinder this development in the inappropriate practice of demeaning children who misbehave.

Swick (1987) considered human relationships as critical factors in the classroom. In order to eliminate unhealthy stress for both students and teachers, he suggested that teachers build relationships with students around books, encourage teacher-child interactions, extend children's ideas, and build on children's strengths.

In her review of the literature on stress, Honig (1986) included low socio-economic status as a factor associated with stress in the lives of young children. She reported that poverty as a chronic family stressor interfered with effective family functioning. However, poverty as a stressor in the lives of children could be "mitigated by social programs that nourish the social and motivational roots of early learning" (p. 55). Rutter (1979) found that protective factors can do much to aid normal development even in the worst situations. He reported that disadvantaged children were less



likely to develop problems if they attended better functioning schools.

Race has been noted as a factor that also could affect how children react to stressors, particularly in the school setting (Burts et al., 1990a). These researchers found that low socio-economic Black children exhibited greater proportions of stress than low socio-economic White children and higher socio-economic Black children in classrooms with inappropriate practices versus classrooms with appropriate practices during periods of waiting, whole group lessons, workbook/worksheet activities, and punishment activities. Their findings suggest that Black children are more at risk than their White counterparts and that low socio-economic Black males are especially vulnerable.

In studying the lack of cultural congruence between lower socio-economic Black children and White middle-class teachers, Heath (1982) has noted that the Black children in the classrooms she studied did not respond to questioning the way middle- and upper-class children did. In the Black children's community, answering a question almost always involved telling a

story or making a comparison but never required furnishing a label or giving an attribute that the school question required. Heath asserted that although teachers must change some of their teaching habits, the adjustment was not one-way. For lower-class Black children to succeed academically, they had to learn to use language "according to the rules of traditional classroom usage" (p. 123). Charlesworth (1987) has suggested that the learning style exhibited by Black children is in conflict with the more restrictive style prevalent in most White middle-class schools. This conflict may cause additional stress to be placed on Black children, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Dohrenwood and Dohrenwood (1970) considered both race and economic status to be sources of stress. These researchers reported lower-class Blacks to be relatively handicapped, compared to their White lower-class counterparts, by the absence of external factors that alleviate the impact of stressors, except in one respect. Blacks have more extra-familial sources of social support than lower-class Whites. Dohrenwood and Dohrenwood noted that this one area of advantage did

not seem sufficient to counterbalance the lower-class Black's disadvantage with respect to "material conditions and familial stability" (p. 122). The vulnerability of males to stress has been noted by Burts et al. (1990a), Honig (1986), and Rutter (1979). It is well known that males are more vulnerable than females to some types of physical stresses and hazards (Rutter). Honig has reported that "boys have higher rates of bed wetting, dyslexia, and delinquency" (p. 54). Honig also reported from a study of metropolitan child care centers serving low-income families that male toddlers gave significantly more stress signals to caregivers than females. Burts et al. have found that males are more vulnerable to certain types of stress than females. Rutter found that males displayed more anxiety reactions to situations demanding achievement when compared to females. Rutter also noted that to some extent this male susceptibility to stress or anxiety applies to psychological and social stresses. "This is most obvious with respect to family discord and disharmony, which consistently have been found to have a greater association with conduct disorders in boys" (p. 296).

### Teacher Demonstrations

To meet children's needs, Isenberg (1987) emphasized more balanced curricula which should, therefore, be less stressful. To inform parents, teachers, and administrators how children learn best, she asserted that the school must provide inservice courses. With regard to inservice programs, the literature suggests a recurring and common theme: Successful programs must include orientation, planning, in-class coaching, and follow-up sessions. While researchers differ somewhat in their approach, such as whether to use teachers to lead the program sessions or outside consultants as resource persons, this theme provides an area of agreement.

Supporting the theme, Zacchei and Loucks (1983) designed an approach based on what they believed to be the crucial components for effective staff development: "Orientation sessions for educators who will be involved in the program, a comprehensive training program, in-class coaching and assistance, the involvement and support of administrators and follow-up activities" (p. 93). Howsam and others (1976) provided an overview of the history of inservice by illustrating

how inservice educational programs have been refined to ultimately deal with the teacher on a practical level in the classroom with cooperative involvement and ideally a follow-up evaluation.

### Teachers' Needs

Chadwick (1983), Elliott (1979), Fullan (1982), and Rubin (1976) reported that inservice education has not addressed teachers' urgent, day-to-day needs. Zacchei and Loucks (1983) emphasized that teachers' personal needs are critical for effective staff development. "Teachers embarking on a new instructional venture are concerned initially with how the change will affect them personally" (p. 95). Other researchers identified teacher needs as paramount for successful educational inservice. Vaughan, Wang, and Dytman (1987) found that the key ingredient in successful program implementation was the classroom teacher. "Instructional innovations can only succeed to the degree to which they are accepted by teachers and actually put in place in classrooms" (p. 40). In evaluating an inservice program on elementary school science, Loucks and Melle (1982) reinforced the importance of classroom implementation. "The

techniques used underscore the strong beliefs we share concerning staff development evaluation: "The proof of the pudding...lies in whether those practices are then used in the classroom" (p. 114).

In his approach to effective staff development, Donlan (1983) compared two models: the developmental model and the deficit model. The deficit model assumes that teachers are deficient in some area, and the lecturer imposes his or her preconceived idea of what information the teacher is lacking. This assumption, valid or not, ignores teacher needs. In contrast, the developmental model emphasizes nondirective teaching, demonstrations, and social interaction. Through interaction and inquiry, teachers can express their needs. Donlan found that when teachers were asked to evaluate the program in light of their professional growth, the developmental group's ratings were significantly higher. Chadwick (1983) observed that inservice programs emphasizing demonstrations are more likely to accomplish their goals than programs that are lecture-based.

It is important to note that Edelfelt and Lawrence (1975), Havelock and Havelock (1973), Lippit and Fox

(1971), and Watson (1967) observed that most programs do not focus on the social interaction perspective of change but on the individual teacher. Also, McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) recognized that there has been little concern regarding classroom application of newly acquired skills. Echoing these criticisms, Chadwick (1983) stated that "programmes are provided for teachers by 'experts' other than teachers" (p. 12).).

Agents of Change: Teachers or Outside Consultants

Robinson and Swick (1983) reported on an institute for continuing staff development in improving early childhood education undertaken by the University of South Carolina and the state's Department of Education. Through the approaches designed by the early childhood educators at the University, various state, local, and teacher-specific needs were met. The key leaders in directing the planning process were university professors, teachers, administrators, and parents. These educational leaders designed a staff development program and utilized university faculty in Early Childhood Education to implement the program over a three-year period.

In contrast to Robinson and Swick (1983), Watts (1982) observed that "it [staff development] is almost always top-down; that is, something set up for teachers by someone else" (p. 101). Watts believed in teachers' learning how to organize and run workshops, how to conduct needs assessments, and how to work in an advisory capacity with other teachers--"all the elements of professional staff development" (p. 101).

Saxl (1982) described a three-year training program for teachers to become effective staff developers. The program utilized the approach that teachers themselves should be the trainers of other teachers but to assume this responsibility, teachers must develop the appropriate skills. The training program was a phased and cumulative process where the foundational information learned in the first year was utilized in the second year. Training progressed from establishing a resource center based in a specific school community to developing skills and knowledge in curriculum development. In response to the teachers' deepening sense of themselves as staff developers, training in the third year more directly addressed that role. Saxl found that teachers could become effective



staff developers if the training were conducted over an extensive time period such as two to three years.

Addressing the issue of teachers as opposed to outside consultants as agents of change, Chadwick (1983) argued that a university or college consultant does not have to be looked upon necessarily as the expert who is telling teachers what to do. Rather, the outside person can be viewed as a valuable resource. Chadwick placed the teacher in the role of examining his or her own classroom, consulting with other teachers and the principal to define the problem, and turning then toward theory to find what works. A specialist or outside resource person could be the teacher's consultant to theory.

#### Principal's Support

Watts (1982) observed that one of the key factors in successful staff development is a supportive and nurturing principal. "Vital to successful staff development is a warm and enthusiastic principal with several years of teaching experience and a deep commitment to the care and nurture of both children and teachers in his or her school" (p. 103). Zacchei and Loucks (1983) asserted that the teacher needs to be

nurtured by providing in-class implementation assistance in the form of training, discussions, and consultations. Supporting these researchers, Chadwick (1983) stated that the senior staff member of the school, the principal, can provide an opportunity to give recognition to the success a teacher has achieved. "This is where thinking about in-service education must properly start. Within the school the senior member of [the] staff looks at the needs and development of those for whom he is responsible" (p. 14).

Rasala (1989) asserted that there must be an investment by the principal and school administration for teachers to feel deeply committed to a program change. In reporting on the innovation of a literature and language program in her kindergarten classroom, Rasala stated that the principal turned the development of the program over to the teachers and stressed that they view themselves as experts. Knowing the teachers would not have a fulltime specialist forever, the principal wanted the classroom teachers to feel ownership. The new curriculum, therefore, was designed as a collaborative project between specialist and the teachers. (Together they had a year to experiment and

develop the program.) Rasala reported that "the process of change done correctly can be a positive experience for administrators, teachers, students, and parents" (p. 65).

Smith and Dauer (1983) described an inservice program for kindergarten through sixth grade that emphasized the importance of providing for the individual differences of the participants, specificity of the teaching strategies demonstrated, and effective leadership. Program leaders were university consultants, and the topics to be demonstrated were teacher-selected. Among the projects chosen was helping children write and read their own books. The researchers found that positive teacher attitude was the result of involving teachers in planning sessions and establishing an atmosphere of trust and support.

In summary, successful demonstration programs have been conducted by using outside resource persons including university personnel and/or utilizing the teachers themselves to conduct the program (Chadwick, 1983; Robinson & Swick, 1985; Smith & Dauer, 1983). It is clear that whoever is responsible for presenting the material must possess realistic knowledge concerning

the particular area of development, must actually focus on meeting the needs of the teachers, and actively involve a top administrative person in the school who is usually the principal (Chadwick, 1983; Rasala, 1989; Saxl, 1982; Watts, 1982; Zacchei & Loucks, 1983).

Chadwick stated that a combined approach to inservice education may hold the best of all worlds with teacher involvement utilizing outside resource personnel as a complementary vehicle.

## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes a study of the classroom teacher's and students' behaviors relating to literacy skills and stress before and after the teacher demonstrations in storybook reading were conducted in a school serving a low socio-economic Black population. The school is located in a metropolitan area of approximately 450,000 people.

The focus of the study was the teacher and students in one kindergarten classroom. There were six girls and six boys ranging in age from four years, ten months to six years, two months. Ninety-two percent of the children received free lunch. The classroom teacher had earned a Master's degree in Elementary Education and had taught young children for nineteen years.

#### Research Design

In ethnography, often the research design is allowed to unfold rather than to be constructed preordinately because sufficient information cannot be known ahead of time about the multiple realities of a social setting to devise a design adequately (Schwartz

& Ogilvy, 1979, p. 41). However, Strauss (1987) contends that ethnographic methodology is best characterized as rules of thumb, that is, "guidelines that should help most researchers in their enterprises" (p. 7).

Therefore, I entered my classroom setting at Carver Elementary School with guidelines that I knew might have to be adjusted or even abandoned during the course of study, but, at least, I had a plan of action in mind. This plan or research design included guidelines for gaining access to the program setting and procedures for conducting observations and interviews, for using researcher-designed instruments, and for analyzing the data. The amount of participation I engaged in during the study emerged as the study unfolded. Since the research design allowed for observation of behavior prior to the demonstrations, the design also established a baseline against which to compare classroom behavior subsequent to the demonstrations. Finally, the literary mode for writing the ethnography was decided upon after the data had been collected.

The instruments used for data collection and the analytical tools and techniques used in the data analysis will be discussed to offer support of the research design which was deduced primarily from Patton's (1980) and Spradley's (1980) qualitative and ethnographic methodologies, respectively. Writing the ethnography, a major part of the research project, also will be discussed.

Traditional anthropologists, Clifford and Marcus (1986), have pointed out that ethnography has been a methodology to describe, to explain, and to interpret. Geertz (1988) does not present ethnography as a fixed set of rules and procedures but as a series of challenges:

Finding somewhere to stand in a text that is supposed to be at one and the same time an intimate view and a cool assessment is almost as much of a challenge as gaining the view and making the assessment in the first place. (p. 10)

Educational ethnographers (e.g., Firestone, 1987; Guba, 1978; Howe & Eisenhart, 1989; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Patton, 1980; Spindler, 1982; Strauss, 1987;

Wolcott, 1990) and educational anthropologists (e.g., Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983; Pelto & Pelto, 1978; Spradley, 1980; Wax, 1971) have reported that data collection and analysis techniques must be competently applied, in a more or less technical sense. Various principles guide how access to the field should be gained, how interviews should be conducted, how instruments should be designed, and how data should be analyzed "so that rather immediate low inference conclusions are rendered credible" (Howe & Eisenhart, 1989, p. 7).

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) have observed that the most common categories of data-collection strategies used by ethnographic researchers are observation, interviewing, researcher-designed instruments, and collection of artifacts, such as school documents and teacher daily lesson plans. "Ethnographers anticipate relying principally on observation, interviewing, researcher-designed instruments, or some combination of these" (p. 108).

Patton (1980) has observed that participant observation traditionally has been viewed by practitioners as a nonjudgmental strategy for acquiring



data to depict social groups and cultural settings authentically. According to Patton, more recently, participant observation has been used in educational studies for evaluation as well as description and interpretation:

Firsthand experience with a program allows an evaluator to be inductive in approach. This is the case because the observer, by being on-site, has less need to rely on prior conceptualizations. In short, the evaluator can directly experience the program as a phenomenon unto itself, thereby making the most of an inductive, discovery-oriented approach. (p. 144)

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) have reported that phenomena initially formulated through observation may be verified through unplanned interviews. Patton (1980) also has emphasized that unplanned interviews, as opposed to more structured ones, are more effective in securing people's genuine feelings and attitudes. Participants are more likely to reveal what they are really thinking if they are not cognizant of an interview as such.

Pelto and Pelto (1978) and Spradley (1980) have distinguished two categories of research tools. One group consists of methods for collecting data that involve interaction between researcher and participant and that produce, as a result, interactions from participants that may affect the data collected. Unobtrusive and other less-reactive techniques, necessitating little or no interaction between investigator and participant, comprise the second group of research tools.

Other ethnographers are in agreement with Pelto and Pelto (1978) and Spradley (1980) that interactive methods share an advantage over unobtrusive measures. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) believed that through the interactive mode, the "procurement of information is controllable: through interviews and personal interaction, the investigator is better able to obtain data that address the questions asked in the study" (p. 109). Spradley, himself, has noted that the investigator lives as much as possible with and in the same manner as the individuals being investigated. "Researchers take part in the daily activities of people, reconstructing their interactions and

activities in field notes taken on the spot or as soon as possible after their occurrence" (p. 54). Patton (1980) observed that the investigator who actively interacts with participants is more likely to understand the setting under investigation.

Where it is impossible to have individuals react to the actual stimulus or context under study, researcher-designed instruments, such as a projective technique, may be substituted (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Spindler (1982) has discussed the use of abstract drawings as a projective technique designed to elicit students' opinions and reactions. Spindler used drawings of familiar rural and urban scenes to assess the school's role in the transition of a German village to an urban community. Pelto and Pelto (1978) have reported that photographs and drawings enable the researcher to project patterns of social interaction unobservable in the natural setting. For example, LeCompte and Goetz were faced with the difficulty of asking four- and five-year-old children to imagine what kindergarten would be like before the children actually had attended school. These researchers used photographs of typical classroom situations as stimuli

for what otherwise would have been a task too abstract for kindergarten children.

As the ethnographer nears the completion of data-gathering, attention is devoted to matters of interpretation. Guba (1978) has stated that while the ethnographer avoids imposing preordinate conceptual categories on the situation being studied, experience with the setting being observed gives rise to categories that help organize what has been observed and experienced. "Initial efforts by the investigator to discover the meaning of what he has observed will cause him to propose certain categories in which to assimilate and account for the noted responses" (p. 6). In other words, as the researcher gathers data, certain words, phrases, patterns of behavior, participants' ways of thinking, and events repeat and stand out. The ethnographer chooses words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns; these words and phrases become coding categories.

As you read through your data, Spradley (1980) says to look for the patterns that stand out, for the key to understanding lies in the recurring patterns of the participants' behavior. Patton (1980) states that

as fieldwork draws to a close, the researcher is increasingly concerned with verification of data and less concerned with the generation of new data. Guba (1978) agrees with Spradley and Patton that there is no definite point at which data collection stops and analysis begins. Spradley suggests analyzing the data at two-week intervals to brainstorm ideas. "Ideas may come from past reading, from some particular theoretical perspective, from some comment made by an informant, from talking about your project with a friend" (p. 72).

When fieldwork has gone well, the evaluator-observer grows increasingly confident that things make sense and begins to believe in the data. Strauss (1987) has described the feelings that the field observer has as fieldwork moves toward a close and data begin to fall into place:

When the researcher is convinced that his conceptual framework forms a systematic theory, that it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matter being studied, that it is couched in a form possible for others to use in studying a similar area, and that

he can publish his results with confidence, then he has neared the end of his analysis and research. (p. 224)

Before the actual writing of an ethnographic account, Wolcott (1990) rereads his field notes entirely to assess the extent to which the interpretation created cross-validates with the setting and individuals on which it is based. However, objectivity is not Wolcott's and Geertz's (1988) criterion as much as disciplined subjectivity. "It is I who must be satisfied now with...criteria like balance, fairness, completeness, sensitivity" (Wolcott, 1990, p. 133).

The writing of an ethnography is a major part of the research project. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have pointed out that the ethnographer is engaged in telling a story, but that what is normally thought of as storytelling is only part of the ethnographer's task. The ethnographer is also engaged in the explication of theory and the construction of typologies, that is, the literary modes and conventions available to the writer to tell his story. The "narrative organization is fundamental to our modes of

reality construction" (p. 213). In other words, readers can experience vicariously individuals whom the ethnographer had the opportunity to experience directly. Hammersley and Atkinson exemplify the importance of using the narrative style in a brief commentary on Geertz's (1988) description of Balinese cock-fighting:

Through his narrative skills, he is able to convey a sense of the quality and texture of Balinese fascination with cock-fighting. Evidence of the fascination is important. It supports taking the activity as a key to something essential about the Balinese; it helps us to understand the analytic statements. (p. 213)

Firestone (1987) emphasizes the importance of rich description in writing the ethnography. "Rich description persuades by showing that the researcher was immersed in the setting and giving the reader enough detail to 'make sense' of the situation" (p. 16).

Therefore, this chapter will be styled in two formats. One style, which includes the guidelines of

the research design as outlined above, will be more formal and will describe how the study was conducted. The other style, which includes richly detailed examples of the ethnographic text, will be constructed in the narrative format.

### Gaining Access to the Setting

The following advertisement appeared in the Baton Rouge newspaper in the summer prior to the study:

... won a House seat. ... constituency had no ... Martinez told a ... 250 waiting to view ... nday night. "He was a ... er we will ever see in

ate Jim Smith praised ... dedication to the ... elderly, but said his ... shed everyone. ... al interest was you — ... h said.

#### DENTISTRY

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Used Crowns and  
rents as low as \$12  
month

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The following narrative, describing the physical setting of the school, depicts my initial visits. The narrative is also a portrayal of the roles of the



principal and the teachers in relation to me and why I am there.

If one journeys north to Carver Elementary School, which is located in the older part of the city, a row of shotgun houses--two bedrooms, one behind the other--comes into view. Often garbage, furniture, cars, and even washing machines can be seen in the front yards. Steering my car carefully around huge neglected crevices in the pavement, I get the feeling that the city should pay more attention to this section of town. As I bounce over the railroad tracks, the Turning Point Lounge, an abandoned Phillips 66 station, is on my right. Green palm trees have been painted on the station's ocean-blue walls made of concrete blocks in an attempt to create a tropical, Hawaiian-like effect. In the early morning, people are milling about carrying anti-abortion signs, and children, who should be in school, are fighting. Turning right onto Acadian Street, I see the school on my left. Typical of construction of the fifties, the school is light brick with a flat white-graveled roof that has been repaired frequently with tar.

Gray clouds hang in the sky, making long shadows waltz across the school yard as I pull into the parking lot. Quickening my pace to get under cover, I feel safe on the school's front porch. Bullets of rain begin to sting the pebbled roof above my head. Once inside the heavy double doors, I smell the sweet air of hot chocolate and doughnuts. As I approach the cafeteria on my left, I catch glimpses of young children blowing and spooning the hot chocolate into their mouths. I wonder as a White person how I will be received when a voice to my right startles me: "Ms. Weems--from LSU?" I turn to face Loretta Brown, the Black principal of Carver Elementary School, whose jewelry and clothes make her look like she has some place important to go. Embarrassed that I had not stopped by her office first, I quickly shake hands and think to comment on the bulletin board above her head: "African-American History."

Mrs. Brown explains that "one of the things that we want to be certain about when we educate our children is that they recognize the contributions of all Americans, especially Black Americans." I agree with her and offer that this recognition would

certainly give the children excellent role models. She continues to explain that Carver had been the pilot school for a project kit that she and her daughter had put together for Black History Month and that each kit contained biographies on famous Black Americans.

As we talked, a trophy case of gold and silver caught my eye. Brightly colored ribbons feathered the felt material lining the case. Next to Mrs. Brown's office hung a huge cardboard sign that said "Honor Roll" and attached to the bottom, a star that read "Principal's List." Although the hallway was antiquated with its patched linoleum flooring and water-stained ceiling, the room reflected the pride of the students and educators who must inhabit this building.

"We're so glad you're here," says Mrs. Brown. "Our kindergarten teachers are trying to integrate whole language techniques in their reading programs, but some need more help than others."

"Yes," I comment, "Dr. Charlesworth has told me about the Accelerated Schools' Model that you are trying to implement."

"Yes, we need assistance, but it's a fine line with some of these teachers out here," confesses Mrs. Brown. "You have to act like you know what you're doing on one hand, yet not act like you're telling them what to do on the other. You have to be friendly on the one hand, but careful not to be too friendly. So I don't know," she laughs.

"I understand," I reassure her and thank her for allowing me to use her school.

The Accelerated Schools Model has been selected by the school's advisory council as the enhancement for attracting White students to the school. The advisory council consists of teachers, parents, and community members. In spite of the Federal Court Order in 1981 to racially integrate, Carver has remained a neighborhood one-race minority school. Of the 29 staff members, 17 are Black; of the 14 classroom teachers, only four teachers are White. The remaining eight White personnel are ancillary staff. That is, they are teachers of auxiliary programs such as Chapter One, a remedial reading program, and Language Development, an enrichment program the kindergarten children take.

"Most of our children are on free lunch," explains Mrs. Brown, "which places them in homes below the poverty level and 'at risk' for school achievement. Most of the parents do not have a high school education and are unemployed. They don't have high expectations for their children. They don't encourage reading or writing. I hope you can give us some ideas while you're here, especially about reading," concludes Mrs. Brown. "Dr. McGee came out once, and the teachers liked what she did."

Clearly, Loretta Brown was concerned with enhancing the education in her school but was sobered by the fact that teacher attitude was an obstacle in attaining this goal. She viewed me, perhaps, as someone who might help change teacher attitude and, in return, had granted me access to the kindergarten classes at her school. I was grateful for her cooperation since she was the "gatekeeper" to the school. That is, she as well as the Superintendent for Instructional Services in the parish controlled my access to the setting.

Anthropologist Rosalie Wax (1971) reported on the problems and processes involved in gaining entry to

fieldwork. She emphasized the importance of established reciprocal relationships during entry. She stated that mutual trust, respect, and cooperation are dependent on the emergence of an exchange relationship in which the observer obtains data and the people being observed find something that makes their cooperation worthwhile.

In the case of Loretta Brown, that "something" is the implementation of the teacher demonstrations. With her cooperation, I will obtain sufficient data through observation and offer not only demonstrations but an ethnography in the hope that it will help her better understand, not only teacher attitude, but how the instructional climate affects student learning and behavior. Thus, Wax's reciprocity model of gaining entry assumes that some reason can be found for participants, such as Loretta Brown, to cooperate in the research and that some kind of mutual exchange can occur.

Watts (1982) stated that one of the key factors in providing successful demonstrations to teachers is the role of the principal; the principal is committed to the nurturance of the children and teachers. Chadwick

(1983) explained that the principal is responsible for the needs and development of those for whom he or she is responsible. To insure the support of Mrs. Brown, open channels of communication were necessary.

Negotiations with her about the nature of my fieldwork and how that work was to be conducted were critical not only in gaining access to the setting but in providing successful demonstrations for the teachers.

Negotiations with her established the rules and conditions for how my role was defined for the teachers being observed. Therefore, Mrs. Brown, not only played an important role in my gaining access to the school, but also in my maintaining rapport with the teachers from the beginning to the end of the study.

Patton (1980) suggested that for many observers doing fieldwork in a school program, the best approach, perhaps, for gaining entrance is the "known sponsor" approach. He explained that by this tactic, observers use the credibility of another person to establish the cooperative involvement of the principal or classroom teacher. In addition to using Wax's (1971) reciprocity model, I was also able to use the "known sponsor" approach. Largely through the efforts of Dr.

Charlesworth, a member of the advisory council to the school, Loretta Brown agreed to my studying literacy development among some of the kindergarten students in her school.

Patton (1980) noted that another reason entree to the research setting is seen as so important concerns the relationship between the initial entrance to the setting and the validity of the data that is subsequently collected. It was important that the principal and the classroom teacher and I develop a friendly rapport, one of mutual trust and respect, so that the final ethnography would remain objective, describe what it was supposed to describe, and thus provide a rich return to the principal and participants involved. In other words, the relationship between me and the teachers had to be genuine so that the statements they rendered would be genuine also.

At my request, Mrs. Brown arranged for me to meet with the three kindergarten teachers and other relevant staff early in the fall semester. At this meeting, I explained that I would be observing kindergarten students' literacy behaviors from 9:00 until 11:00 each morning (their language arts period) over a three-week



period. After that initial observation period, I would provide six weekly teacher demonstrations to show effective storyreading techniques. I would, then, observe the children an additional three weeks. During the period of teacher demonstrations, the children also would be observed. I explained to the teachers that they had been in the classroom a lot longer than I and that I considered them the "experts." I was certain that they had some preferences regarding the demonstrations. All agreed that they needed direction with the new reading program, specifically the program's manual, a guidebook with instructions for reading readiness referred to as the basal.

As our discussion unfolded, it was evident that these teachers adhered to the basal. Seldom did they deviate from its daily lesson plans. The new reading series was selected from those approved by the educational system under a mandate for developmentally appropriate kindergarten instruction. Therefore, I was not about to suggest that the teachers discard the basal, although I knew they had creative ideas of their own that could enhance the reading instruction. I emphasized that I would try to enrich and extend some

of the basal prescriptions, that I knew they had good ideas, too, and that we would work together. Although I reassured them they would not be evaluated, I omitted revealing that the study would involve only one kindergarten classroom. Earlier, Mrs. Brown had cautioned me that concentration in one class could pose a possible threat for that teacher.

Patton (1980) had cautioned that social situations are seldom simple. "The observer is not immune to the political dynamics of the settings being observed" (p. 181). Political factions may either accept or reject the observer, but they are seldom neutral. Patton also noted that such alliances or rejections can greatly affect the course of fieldwork. "At the same time, my experience suggests that it is impossible--or at least impractical--to expect to have the same degree of closeness or distance with every group or faction" (p. 181). Although I realized that I would have to be ready to deal with rejection from some of the teachers, it was critical that an open and friendly rapport be maintained with the teacher I chose to study.

It was merely a coincidence that Samantha Johns, one of the kindergarten teachers, had fallen from a

table in her classroom and was out for the week. I was considering her class for my study since I could observe her students in depth for at least a week without the possible danger of rejection from her.

Other factors played into this decision. One of the teachers, Mrs. Washington, slammed her door when she learned of my presence in the kindergarten wing. Another kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Alexander, welcomed me with open arms, but had already implemented learning centers and other whole language techniques in her classroom. Since I had extremes in these two teachers, I thought that Mrs. Johns, who from brief encounters seemed sincere and easy-going, would be more suitable for my study.

In the upcoming weeks, Mrs. Washington was cordial and friendly whenever our paths crossed but continued to shut her door. On the other hand, Mrs. Alexander openly expressed dissatisfaction with me since I was more involved with Mrs. Johns' class. However, on the occasions that I did observe in Mrs. Alexander's classroom, she always had an errand to run, a phone call to make, or a meeting to attend. In contrast, Mrs. Johns, as well as her children, viewed me as a

friendly helper. She seldom left the room and on those rare occasions returned immediately. Later in the study, she confided in me, "At first, I didn't know how I was going to handle a new person in my classroom, but when I saw how willing you were to help, then I knew everything was going to be all right."

#### Participant Observation

Patton (1980) asserted that the first and most fundamental distinction that differentiates observational strategies concerns the extent to which the observer is a participant in the activities or program being studied. He viewed participant observation as a continuum ranging from complete participant to complete observer. Since I was not observing from behind a one-way mirror, I could not be a complete observer, and since I was not actually a child, I could never be a complete participant.

In the initial stages of study, I was more of an observer than a participant, as planned. However, I became a participant sooner than I anticipated because of a possible tension I perceived between Mrs. Johns and myself. Although Mrs. Johns and I had established a good rapport initially, anxiety was experienced on

her part and mine the first week she was back in the classroom. She was apologetic for the children's behavior as well as the classroom interruptions, and I felt self-conscious as anyone might in the midst of a new culture.

In order to maintain good rapport, I thought if I participated, as opposed to merely observing, the tension would ease. Therefore, shortly into my third week of observations, I asked if I could conduct a teacher demonstration just for her class. Her shoulders dropped and a big smile spread across her face as she gratefully said, "That would be wonderful." From that point on, I became a participant observer. I became active not just in the weekly teacher demonstrations but in the children's daily routines as well.

Spradley (1980) asserted that active participation seeks to do what other people are doing, not merely to gain acceptance but to more fully learn the cultural rules of behavior. I discovered that by working directly with these kindergartners--singing the anthem and pledging allegiance, blessing the food and reading stories, assisting with their work and involving them

in dialogue, modeling good manners and praising their efforts--I came to know these children and their capabilities and to better understand the context within which this program was operating.

#### Descriptive Observation

Spradley (1980) suggested that the ethnographer engage in two types of observation: descriptive and focused. Addressing descriptive observation, Patton (1980) reported that the purpose of observational data is to describe the setting that is observed, the activities that take place in that setting, the people who participate in those activities, and the meanings of each. Spradley stated that the purpose of descriptive observation is for the observer to look at everything to get a holistic perspective. Patton noted that this perspective is not always feasible. In reality, fieldwork and observations often focus on a particular part of the culture because of researcher interests and the practicality of allocating time to those things which the researcher considers most important. Therefore, in the present study, I incorporated both Spradley's and Patton's views of

descriptive observation. First, I provided a more holistic perspective of a kindergarten classroom and then proceeded to report on part of the classroom setting.

Tuesday, September 12, 1989

9:00 a.m. All twelve of the children have come in from breakfast by now. Tiffany is crying. I sit beside her to comfort her. I ask if I can see her smile; she complies. I compliment her on the turquoise earrings she is wearing, and she smiles again. I tell her that they sparkle like her eyes when she isn't crying. When I ask her to join the other children, the rims fill up with tears again.

"Let's say our alphabets!" roars the children's substitute teacher, Mrs. Johnson. One child, Leo, looks lost; he gazes around the room as if Mrs. Johnson and the other children are invisible. Another child, Tykesha, looking equally lost, says each letter just after it has been spoken. Most of the children are reciting names of letters in rote fashion from A to Z. They also recite numbers from one to one hundred and name the days of the week and the months of the year.

Finally, Mrs. Johnson asks the children to sit back with their legs folded, as she places several cardboard bears in front of them. She furnishes each child with an apron. The children then take turns dressing the bears. They have to match the small letter on the apron to the capital letter on the bear.

Stovall, who is dressed in faded red shorts unraveling at the hem and a soiled T-shirt, holds the apron "w." (I can see two sores on his left leg and a scar of some sort running down his chest.) He has difficulty finding the right bear. After choosing one, he looks up at Mrs. Johnson with a big smile.

"Is that the right bear, class?" asks Mrs. Johnson, clearing her throat.

"Nooo!" most of them say.

Tiffany, who has stopped crying but has not rejoined the group, whispers to me, "W is an upside down m."

Mrs. Johnson tells her, "Shhh."

Biffie, Katie, and Shalindra match their letters without difficulty. "For those of you who are having trouble," commands Mrs. Johnson in her sergeant-like voice, "look at the bears that aren't dressed yet.



Which bears do not have any clothes on?" The children try to help each other, but Mrs. Johnson insists on their quietness. Eventually all the children dress their bears by listening to her cues. She ends the activity by asking the children to recite the alphabet again. This time Tiffany joins the group.

During this observation of an inappropriate literacy activity, signs of stress-related behaviors, such as crying and gazing around the room, were noted.

#### Focused Observation

Spradley (1980) also discussed how to limit the scope of the ethnography while maintaining a holistic view. He suggested making in-depth or focused observations of a few cultural domains and then relating them to the rest of the cultural scene. He compared this process to a funnel, the broad rim of which consists of descriptive observations in which the ethnographer wants to catch everything that goes on in the field. These rich descriptions of the fieldwork are the foundation of all ethnographic research and should continue throughout the entire study. Moving down the rim and into the narrow part of the funnel, the observations become more focused and selective as

the ethnographer relates to his or her areas of interests.

The preceding excerpt from the data represented a holistic view, the rim of the funnel, of what Mrs. Johns' class was like when I first arrived. In the following example, my focus represented the more narrow part of the funnel to describe part of the classroom setting, specifically the literacy skills and stress-related behaviors that operated in that setting.

Tuesday, November 7, 1989

9:30 a.m. I have chosen to read Whistle for Willie by Ezra Jack Keats to six of the children. After reading the story, I suggest that we act out the story parts. The children are excited. I ask Stovall to be the boy, Peter; and Patrick, his dog Willie; Tykesha, the mother; Michael, the father; and Shalindra and Darilyn, the girls jumping rope. Patrick makes a good Willie. When he hears a whistle, his eyebrows shoot to his forehead. Stovall remembers most of the story's events. He just has to be reminded to hide under the table to whistle for his dog. Michael hesitates with his part. Using a deep, throaty voice, I coax him to use the words a father might use.

After the remainder of the class has acted out the story a second time, I surprise the children with a miniature tape recorder with a microphone. I tell them a little about the recorder and explain that when I hand them the microphone, they are to act like they are movie stars reading a script. "Yes," I tell them, "you are stars, just like you are readers and writers!" Their eyes grow big with excitement.

Biffie, Jason, Jesse, and Tiffany come in from language development, the enrichment program required of the kindergarten students. These children had acted out the story earlier in the morning but had missed recording themselves. When I repeated the activity with these children, Tiffany took the book and said, "I know how to read!" I handed her the microphone, and assuming the role of storyreader, she began:

The name of this book is Whistle for Willie--  
w--i--l--l--i--e (spelling the word). This  
is the book about Peter and his dog. Peter  
tried to whistle for his dog to come for him.  
(She makes the "w" sound to try to whistle.)  
He went round and round and round. He drew a  
line for to go home. Peter tried to dress up

like his daddy. Peter asked his mom, "Do she know where is the little boy?" (Tiffany looks up at Biffie in anticipation of her answering the question.) Peter saw his shadow and tried to run away from it. Peter saw his dog. Peter got under the carton and he whistled! His dog came to him. He showed his mamma and daddy how he could whistle. He ran to the grocery store and back.

Thus, in this more focused observation, specific literacy skills, such as recognizing letters and sounds, sequencing the story's events, communicating with a friend, and matching words to pictures, were noted. During this observation, no signs of stress-related behaviors were observed.

#### Phases of Observation

##### Initial and Follow-up

As previously mentioned, in the initial stages of study, my role as an ethnographer was more an observer's role than that of a participant. The following observation shows how my role as an observer progressed from merely observing to more actively participating.

Tuesday, September 12--"primarily an observer"

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Observer</u>
1. Comforting Tiffany who is crying.	1. Children coming in from breakfast.
2. Tiffany whispering to me.	2. Children sitting Indian-style.
	3. Whole-class activity: small & capital letters.
	4. Children reciting the alphabet.
	5. Tykesha's "mouthing" the ABC's.
	6. Leo's gaze wandering.
	7. Stovall dressed poorly.
	8. Children helping each other.

Tuesday, November 7--"an active participant"ParticipantObserver

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Reading to children.                      | 1. Six children reacting to the story, acting out the story, and recalling story events. |
| 2. Interacting with the children.            |  |
| 3. Play-acting with the children.            |  |
| 4. Directing the drama.                      | 2. Tiffany's reading the story.  |
| 5. Explaining the function of tape recorder. |  |
| 6. Demonstrating how to use the microphone.  |  |
| 7. Praising the children.                    |  |
| 8. Interacting with Mrs. Johns.              |  |

The point that must be made here is that researchers who adopt qualitative methods must not think that the ideal is full and complete participation in the

program--"going native" (Patton, 1980). The ethnographer's goal is to participate to the extent that he or she is capable of understanding the program as an insider, yet still capable of taking field notes to adequately describe the program for outsiders. If the ethnographer decides on the role of "going native," his or her true identity is entirely concealed ("fly on the wall"). The ethnographer becomes a member of the group and gains access to privileged information. A case in point is Van Maanen's (1981) ethnographic account of his joining the New York Police Department to study ethical behaviors among policemen. His masked role as a member of the police force is an example of "going native;" his concealed identity is referred to as "fly on the wall."

As an ethnographer, I did not "go native," since I could not become a child; and I did not unobtrusively observe the participants as a "fly on the wall." When, in the initial stages of study, I was an observer moving as unobtrusively as possible into the classroom setting, it can be said that I did not participate. However, when the teacher demonstrations began, my role as ethnographer progressed from unobtrusive to intrusive. From ethnographer "observing," I became ethnographer

"doing." Paradoxically, my intrusive role was less intrusive for the classroom teacher than when I was an observer. She was ill at ease with my passiveness and grateful for my participation. Therefore, for this study, intervention was appropriate, especially since Mrs. Brown and the teachers had asked for change. They expressed the need for help with their whole language program, specifically the new reading series.

#### Teacher Demonstration Phase

Never did I come so close to being a complete participant as when I was conducting the teacher demonstrations. During the demonstrations, I was close to being a complete participant in the sense that my role as an observer was almost entirely concealed. It was not that I was trying to mask this role, as Van Maanen had; it was that to conduct the demonstrations effectively, concentration on observing was virtually impossible.

Providing demonstrations for the teachers was the "trade-off" for my gaining access to the school. My original plan was to use the first three weeks to observe the children so that I knew where they were in their literacy development and in which activities they



were experiencing stress, then to conduct weekly teacher demonstrations for six weeks, and to observe the children and their teacher for three weeks following the demonstrations. When I decided to conduct my first demonstration, two things happened. Mrs. Johns, who now worked well with me in her classroom, became anxious thinking about the other teachers' and the principal's watching her children as subjects of the demonstrations. She was concerned that the children would misbehave and that their behavior would be a reflection of her. She was also afraid that her room was not decorated or "dressed up" enough. Although these fears were unfounded, out of respect for Mrs. Johns, I asked Mrs. Alexander if the demonstrations could be held in her room and if her children could be the subjects. She was pleased.

The change in plans solved the problem of giving Mrs. Alexander desired attention. Moreover, including her in the planning phase of the teacher demonstrations was the "orientation phase" Zacchei and Loucks (1983) had referred to as critical in implementing successful staff development. This involvement afforded her the opportunity not only to work with me, but to show off

the products of her whole language methods--her students. Since her students were not the focus of my study, I was free to concentrate solely on what I was offering the teachers.

As previously has been discussed, in the initial phase of study, I sensed that in Mrs. Johns' room I needed to participate and, therefore, conducted a demonstration just for her. In my field notes, I referred to this as a pilot demonstration. The demonstration served two purposes. I could observe the children involved in my study and at the same time iron out any kinks for the upcoming demonstrations for Mrs. Alexander's class. Thus, the compromise pleased both Mrs. Johns and Mrs. Alexander and gave me a chance to practice. The official teacher demonstrations are included in Appendix B; the data from the pilot demonstration is presented below.

#### Pilot Demonstration

Wednesday, September 27, 1989

9:00 a.m. After the usual ritual of counting, reciting letters and months of the year, and pledging allegiance, the children sat in their usual semi-circle fashion. I reminded them of the special manners that we

had discussed for bookreading--that a book was like a treasure. When opened, it spilled forth its secrets. It was important to listen and to ask questions so that they would understand the secrets. It was also important to listen to others.

My objective for today's demonstration was to develop language awareness of the letter "p." Today was also the children's first formal experience with print. During the first few weeks of school, the basal instructed the classroom teacher to reinforce the children's concept of colors; and this was the first week the basal introduced a letter.

Since the teachers had agreed that they wanted help with their new reading series, I thought it was important to use storybooks that paralleled what the basal was emphasizing. Therefore, the two books I had chosen for the demonstration were The P Family and Pumpkin Man.

To relate the story to the children's experience, we talked about October, Halloween, and pumpkins. I wrote the letter "p" on the board. Immediately, Katie shouted, "p!" I asked, "Do we have someone in our class whose name begins with "p?" Patrick raised his hand.

I told the children that the name of the story was The P Family and that the author was Mary Jane Everett. I asked who remembered what an author was, and Biffie said, "The one who writes the book." I replied, "Yes. And the person who wrote this book is a friend of mine." I reminded them that Ms. Everett was going to be our guest author one day and that they were authors, too. "Today we are going to make a class book," I informed them. Their eyes grew big as they became quiet.

"In The P Family book," I explained, "each member's name begins with the letter 'p.'"

I encouraged the children to say the names with me: Grandfather Pa, Grandmother Pearl, Daddy Paul, Mamma Paula, and Baby Paddy. We repeated the names. When I referred to the baby's name, Jesse was the first student to say, "P-P-Paddy!" (Another student, Shalindra, was having a hard time respecting the bookreading rules. She was displaying signs of stress such as gazing at the ceiling and lying supine in the semi-circle.)

"It's Halloween night," I read to the children in a hushed voice, "and Grandfather Pa decides to pick a pumpkin from the pumpkin patch. He puts a candle in it and places the pumpkin on the porch." I used a deep

Grandpa-like voice to secure Shalindra's attention. In a quieter voice, I whispered, "When it's time to blow out the candle, Grandfather Pa makes the 'w' sound."

"It's not gonna go out, is it?" asked Jesse, looking up wide-eyed.

I continued reading the story, and the children discovered that all the family members, except Baby Paddy, tried to blow out the candle without success because they were making the wrong sound.

"I bet Paddy can blow it out," reassured Jesse.

"Yes, Baby Paddy goes 'puff,' and the candle goes out," I said.

The children were puffing the "p" sound. "Tykesha, I bet you can make the candle go out," I encouraged her. She struggled at first but finally succeeded. Leo was looking up at me but saying nothing. Slowly, he made a puffing sound.

Rather than stay any longer in a fixed seating arrangement that could create a stressful environment, we moved freely about the room to reenact the second story, Pumpkin Man, and concluded the demonstration by making a class book and listing our names as authors. We discussed authoring the book and the order in which

the story events occurred. The children then represented their favorite events on paper. After each student had completed his or her picture, I helped the children sequentially arrange their pieces to create a class rendition of Pumpkin Man.

Thus, by having conducted a "pilot" demonstration, bookreading techniques were rehearsed, and observations of literacy and stressful behaviors were made. The official demonstration was scheduled for day after tomorrow.

#### Features of the Social Situation

##### Space--Physical

The social situation (program setting) is the physical environment within which the program takes place (Patton, 1980). Patton has cautioned ethnographers not to take the physical environment for granted, since the physical environment of a program can be important to what happens in that environment. The way the walls look in rooms, the amount of space available, how the space is used, how people are organized in the space, and the reactions of program participants to the physical setting can be important information about the effects of the program on

participants. Thus, a vital concern to the program is the spatial context in which behavior and learning occur.

Swick (1987) has reported that space includes physical, psychological, and social aspects and that stress can be induced when the physical space is rigid, unattractive, poorly organized, or otherwise inadequate. Careful thought, therefore, has been given to the following description of the physical layout of Mrs. Johns' classroom so as to evaluate its possible contributions to inducing learning and stress.

Upon entering Mrs. Johns' kindergarten classroom, one is struck with the orderliness and spaciousness of the room. The same kind of ocean-blue concrete blocks that wall the Turning Point Lounge en route to the school form Mrs. Johns' walls as well, except that the classroom blocks are painted a bright yellow. A sturdy brown carpet covers the floor. Mrs. Johns, a tall and slender Black woman, almost regal in appearance, stands in the back of the room where the bulletin board, the housekeeping center, a sink, and the art center are located. Rice Krispies have been poured into a pan on the stove, and fruit jars stuffed with brushes soaking

stand in the sink. Stove Top, Jiffy Mix, Honey Grahams, Pecan Clusters, Poppycock, and Purex containers sit on the housekeeping center shelf. The bulletin board, painted yellow to match the walls, displays a cardboard tree. Children's names printed on leaves are stapled to the branches.

In the front of the room, stand a mirror with hats and wigs hanging on the sides, a chalkboard, the American flag, a storage closet, and a coat closet, that when closed, looks tidy. However, when the closet doors are opened, the view is incongruent with the neat veneer of the classroom. Shelves that slump in the middle hold broken toys, skateboards without wheels, deflated balls, and tangled jump ropes. Mixed in with the toys are the children's school boxes with broken crayons, scissors that do not work, and stubs for pencils. Squashed tightly on the bottom are T-shirts; bandanna head-bands; forgotten sweaters; strapless book sacks; and curled-up, worn-out sneakers.

On the side of the room, next to Mrs. Johns' desk, is a third center, the book and puzzle center. It contains large and small building blocks, puzzles and prisms, games such as Color Bingo and Community Helpers,



and a small collection of books containing too much text and too few pictures for four- and five-year-olds.

Three tables where the children work are adequately spaced near the other side of the room where windows and wood paneling make up the exterior wall. In the center of the room, is a large area designated as the "semi-circle" where whole class activities take place. There are two exits from the classroom. One leads to the bathroom and water fountain shared by the other two kindergarten rooms, and one leads to the kindergarten playground, which is separate from the playground for the elementary children.

Therefore, in Mrs. Johns' classroom, a large portion of space is utilized in keeping with the Burts et al. study's (1990a) definition of a low-stress environment, that is, the opportunity to make choices and move freely about the environment. In the housekeeping and art centers, the children can make choices and move about freely. They can "dress up" in hats and wigs and model in front of the mirror. They can choose boxes of cereal and other items of environmental print to "play restaurant." Also, the newly purchased equipment on the playground is

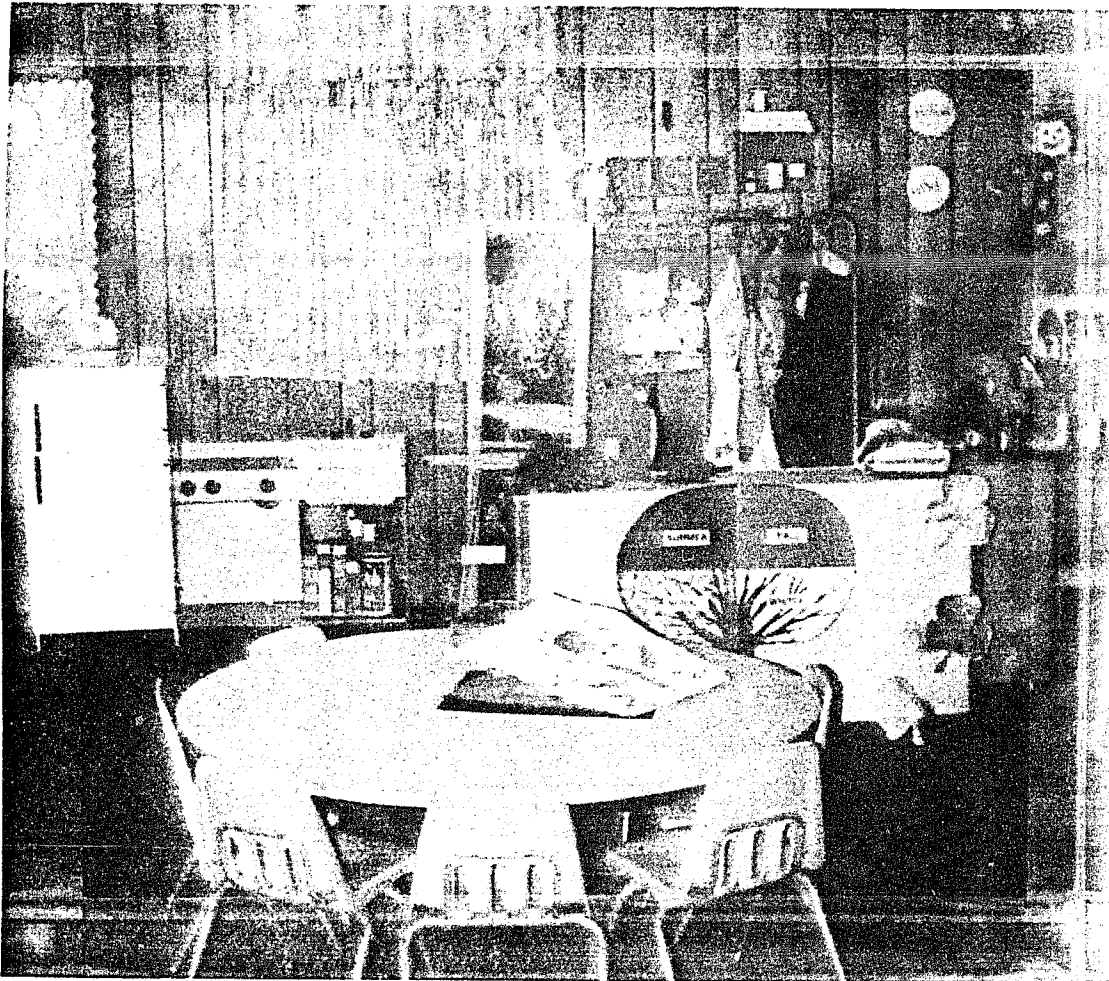
developmentally appropriate for four- and five-year-old children.

Some of the space, however, is used in ways that could contribute to a stressful environment. The "semi-circle," located in the center of the classroom, is the designated area for whole-group and teacher-directed activities. Because these activities are directed to a whole group, more time is required to administer the instruction, and children have to sit longer. The disarray of clothing and school supplies in the coat closet could also lead to aggressive behaviors of stress. For example, in a quarrel over the ownership of a pencil, a child shut another child in the closet. Thus, what is included in the physical environment and how it is arranged can be important to what happens in that environment.

#### The Social Environment

Just as physical environments affected the program setting, social environments affected the setting also. Patton (1980) noted that the ways in which human beings interacted created social constellations that affected how participants behaved toward each other in their environments. In describing the social environment,

Patton urged the observer to look for the ways in which people organized themselves into groups and subgroups. Male-female groupings, patterns of interaction, and the direction of communication patterns (from teacher to students and students to teacher) revealed things about the social environment.



PICTURE OF HOUSEKEEPING AND ART CENTER

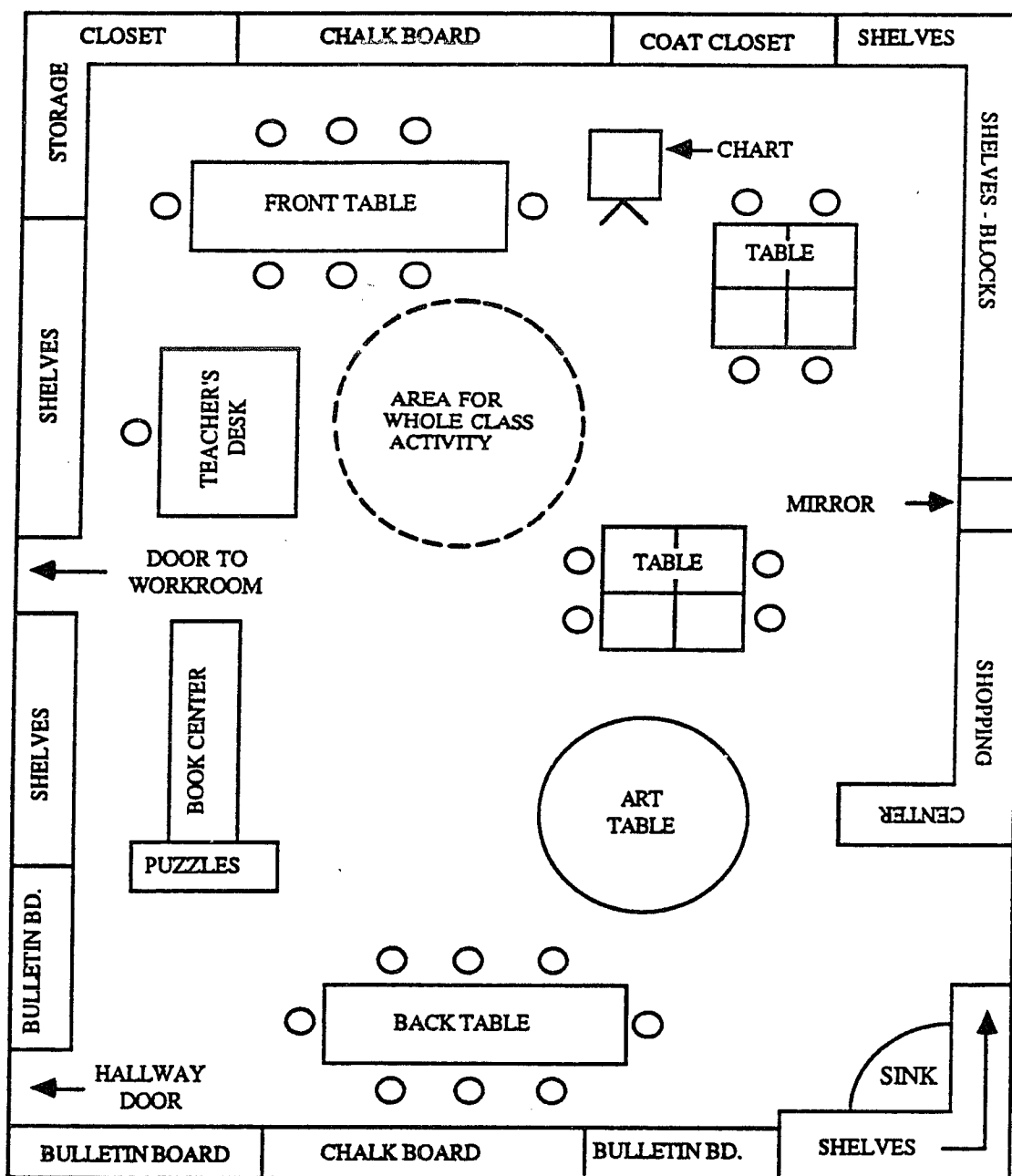


Figure 1. Floor plan of classroom.

What I noted emerging in these initial observations of the social environment was a pattern of how Mrs. Johns grouped the children. Primarily, she placed high-ability children with high ability-children and low-ability children with other low-ability children. This social arrangement resulted in a homogeneous social grouping that remained fairly fixed throughout the study. That is, high-ability students played with each other on the playground and sat by each other in the cafeteria. Lower achieving children played and ate together. The exception was a repeater, Jesse. He fit comfortably into either group and actually socialized more with the lower-ability children. Mrs. Johns frequently chose Jesse to work with the slower children. Having experienced the stigma of failure, he was pleased with his role of importance.

In a study on the grouping of lower socio-economic students in the classroom, Rosenfeld (1971) observed that students performed better when grouped by interests rather than by abilities. Mrs. Johns sometimes mixed the ability levels of her students. The following is an example of how Mrs. Johns combined

abilities within groups. (Examples of homogeneous grouping appear in Chapter Four.)

Monday, September 18, 1989

The children sent to the housekeeping center are all high-ability students, except Michael. (Jason, Patrick, and Katie recognize "big" words such as Honey Grahams and Pecan Clusters; Michael does not recognize these words.) Tiffany, a high-ability student, is placed with three slower children, Tykesha, Shalindra (a repeater), and Leo, in the art center. In her excitement, Tykesha flings paint; Mrs. Johns calmly asks Tiffany to provide assistance.

Earlier that morning, Mrs. Johns had asked another high-ability student, Biffie, to go on a treasure hunt with two slower children, Michael and Stovall, to find yellow objects. "Let's look at Michael's house," suggested Mrs. Johns. "It's really a shopping mall. Point to the part, Michael, that is yellow."

Michael cautiously places his fingers on the yellow part.

Yes!" exclaimed his teacher.

Stovall then showed the class the red and yellow toy he had found.

"Stovall," asked Mrs. Johns, "are the wheels on that toy yellow? Now, I want you to answer me in a complete sentence."

"Yeah," replied Stovall.

"Yes, what?" prompted Mrs. Johns. She waited for him to make a sentence, then said, "Yes, the wheels are yellow."

Bredekamp (1987) has emphasized that heterogeneous grouping or mixing abilities is less stressful for young children. In this example, Biffie had been grouped with Michael and Stovall to ease their transition into a new school activity.

#### Activities and Behaviors

Swick (1987) considered the human relationship aspect of the classroom setting to be a critical factor. Swick noted that when children lack opportunities for social interaction, they cannot learn how to handle the social environment appropriately and that this may result in stress. In order to eliminate unhealthy stress for both students and teachers, Swick suggested that the teacher may effectively build a relationship by demonstrating appropriate behaviors. For example, when Stovall walked in late (a frequent



occurrence), Mrs. Johns greeted, "I'm so glad you're here, darlin'. Where have you been?" "Nuttin'," he uttered (meaning nowhere). "It's raining today, and you couldn't get to school, could you?" reassuring him that it was okay to be late because the tardiness was probably out of his control.

According to Swick (1987), another factor in building positive relationships can be the proper management of social behaviors in instruction. Since social interactions and bookreading are inseparable, the teacher can model the language skills of asking and answering questions, making comments, sharing personal experiences, and other social skills, such as taking turns, listening to others, and the give-and-take of conversation. If the teacher accepts and extends children's ideas, children can gain confidence in expressing themselves. If the teacher listens to the ideas of children, they, too, can learn to respect the ideas of others.

In the first week of observations, it was evident that these kindergartners were unfamiliar with the ways of sharing or even responding politely to classmates and adults. Therefore, in the bookreading sessions,

the social skills of taking turns, of sharing the book so that everyone could see the pictures, and of providing positive feedback were modeled for the children. The following data show how such appropriate bookreading interactions affected the children's behavior:

The children have just participated in the storyreading of Pumpkin Man, and Leo, Tykesha, Michael, Stovall, and Jesse are gathered at a table to make pumpkin man puppets. Although most of them experience difficulty cutting and pasting, they handle this social situation appropriately. When I hand Jesse a paper bag to make the puppet body, he says, "Thank you, Miss Nancy." I reply, "You're welcome, Jesse." When I hand Leo his bag, he looks up at me with large, gentle eyes and slowly says, "Thank--you--Miz--Nan--cy." Stovall whispers to me, "Do you want me to write a 'five' on my pumpkin? I can make smiley faces too," he says. I tell him he draws the faces so well that I am sure he can make some of the letters in his

own name. I assist him with his first name, but he writes his last name without help. Stovall puts smiley faces on Leo's and Tykesha's puppets because they also are writing the letters in their names. "Thank you," says Tykesha. "You're welcome," says Stovall. "Thank--you," says Leo. The children continue to interact positively with each other and assist each other with both activities.

Throughout the remainder of the study, I was struck with the children's imitating of social skills that were modeled in the bookreading sessions. Such politeness formulae, as "My name is-----". What is your name?" and "thank you" and "you're welcome," became a way of socially interacting in Mrs. Johns' classroom.

The methodology section thus far has shown how I gained access to the program setting and the amount of observation and participation I played in the initial and later phases of the study and during the teacher demonstration phase. The importance of the degree of participation was discussed. Then the setting itself was described--its spacial and social arrangements, the

interaction and activities that often occurred in these arrangements, and some of the behaviors characteristic of the participants in the setting. The remainder of this chapter describes the procedure for collecting and analyzing the data, the reliability and validity of the study, and finally, the limitations of the study.

### Procedure

#### Organization of Field Notes

It has been said that the foundation of all ethnographic research are the descriptions gained from the rigorous fieldwork conducted daily (Spradley, 1980). Integral parts of this fieldwork are the field notes, interviews, and researcher-designed instruments. In ethnography, the ethnographer, himself, is a research instrument and has to develop a system for recording and organizing his field notes. Patton (1980) and Spradley have suggested formats commonly used by ethnographers for the organization of their field notes.

#### Condensed and Expanded Accounts

Spradley (1980) has recommended the following format: the condensed account which corresponds to Patton's (1980) "vague and over-generalized notes" and the expanded account which corresponds to Patton's

"detailed and concrete notes." Spradley has noted that all field notes represent a condensed version of what actually occurs. "It is humanly impossible to write down everything" (p. 31).

When I observed what was occurring in Mrs. Johns' classroom, I took detailed field notes and wrote down as much as I possibly could. Since my role as a participant was more dominant than my role as an observer, I had to be strategic about taking the field notes. Timing the writing of the notes and recording them in such a way that I was able to accomplish the task without unduly affecting the participation or observation was an ongoing challenge. Patton (1980) asserted that the basic rule of thumb is to write promptly. Fortunately, I had access to a computer every day as soon as I left the setting. Whatever was not recorded on the spot could be readily captured on the computer.

It is important to expand the notes in such a way that the reader feels like he or she has been placed at the scene. The following notes are from an interview with Mrs. Johns.

Condensed Notes

After the bookreading, I discussed the behavior problems with Mrs. Johns who told me that this was a different group of children, many of whom had been taught very little.

Expanded Notes

The children came from "broken" homes where there was a TV in every room but not a single time for family meals, thus conversation with children was rare. There was no time for bookreading, the learning of manners, or even set routines for eating or sleeping.

"Most of them are 'latch-key' children," says Mrs. Johns. "They don't see their mammas or daddies 'til dark. A lot of parents don't care. When Biffie's mother was here, she say Biffie begged for her to read her a book, but she don't have no

time for reading. I told that mamma to read to that child--Biffie is starvin' for attention! Leo is a precious thing, but he don't know where he is. I told that mamma to work with that child. Katie say her mamma works with her, and you can tell. You can tell that Tykesha's mother has never worked with her a day in her life! Stovall is a little slow, but he's improving. Have you noticed his burns? His mother dropped a hot iron on him when he was a baby. Shalindra," continues Mrs. Johns, "is a repeater and is still messin' around. I don't

know what to do with her.

Maybe you can help."

This example illustrates the importance of detailed description. A word like "different" (as in a different group of children) is not descriptive; it is interpretive and conceals what is actually going on (Patton, 1980). The ethnographer wants the reader to be aware of details he or she would not notice even if he or she were present at the setting (Spradley, 1980). There are differences between the observer at-the-scene observing for social purposes and the ethnographer observing for research purposes. Consider, for instance, Spradley's example of the ordinary participant who has crossed a busy intersection many times:

This person approaches the street without thinking about the cultural rules for crossing. Watching the traffic, slowing to step off the curb, and weaving skillfully among the crowd of people coming from the other side, the ordinary participant's thoughts may be a million miles away. A participant observer, on the other hand,



studying this common social situation, would seem, to all outward appearances, like an ordinary participant. The unseen differences would mostly remain hidden inside the investigator's head. (p.54)

In the course of fieldwork, then, researchers watch what people do, listen to what people say, and record as much information as possible. The information includes accounts of what is happening and the observer's reflections about the meaning of what is happening.

Both Patton (1980) and Spradley (1980) have addressed the importance of recording the interpretations and reflections of fieldwork. Spradley has suggested recording this personal side of fieldwork in a separate journal. Patton has suggested recording personal feelings as part of the data. I found that as I observed Mrs. Johns' class, I recorded my ideas and feelings with the data and then segmented this personal side from the data at the computer. Such a wealth of information was bombarding me that it was risky to switch notebooks. I was afraid that the nature and intensity of my feelings would be lost. At times, I

used an audio tape recorder in the setting, especially when the children were engaged in more than one activity. Interviews with the children and classroom teacher also were taped.

### Interviews

In this ethnography, the conversational interview was a major tool of the research used in combination with the participant observations. In his chapter on qualitative interviewing, Patton (1980) reported that during periods of unplanned activity, the ethnographer has opportunities to talk with participants about what they are experiencing in the program. "In some cases the observer simply listens in on the conversation of others, and in others it is more appropriate to conduct informal interviews" (p. 216). Patton asserted that surveys and questionnaires are ineffective at "getting at" what people really think. He recommended the informal interview approach if one is truly interested in obtaining the genuine feelings of people.

Patton (1980) described the informal conversational interview, which involves the entirely spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of interaction, as typically an interview that occurs

as part of ongoing participant observation fieldwork. Because of its informality, the interviewee is not cognizant of an interview as such and renders more genuine statements and feelings. Patton called this type of interview the mainstay of participant observation because of the high degree of involvement on the parts of the researcher and the participants. Since I was a participant observer in Mrs. Johns' class every day, I had many opportunities to become centrally involved with her and the children.

Spradley (1980) reported that a formal interview usually occurs at an appointed time and results from a specific request to hold the interview. If the observer has developed friendly relationships with people in the social situation, he may want to ask for such an interview: "I'd like to get your ideas about what goes on in the classroom" might be sufficient for setting up a formal interview. Spradley contended that it is probably best to begin formal interviews with descriptive questions such as, "Can you describe to me what you do from the time you first enter the classroom in the morning until you leave in the afternoon?" or more focused questions such as, "Can you tell me what

goes on during your language arts period?" An even more structured question is, "You said that the following things go on during your language arts period: (a) doing whatever the basal says to do that day, (b) getting the children to listen and follow directions, (c) getting directly to the point because the children's attention is short, and (d) sending them to their various centers to do their work. Are those the only things that go on, or are there other things?" By structuring questions in this way, the ethnographer learns about activities and behaviors that possibly could have been overlooked.

Patton (1980) emphasized that no matter how carefully one words interview questions, all comes to naught if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the person interviewed. He says that analyzing the data involves making sense out of what people have said; looking for patterns in the interviews; and putting together what is said, first in one place, then in another.

In Mrs. Johns' kindergarten class, the language arts period culminates right before recess. Usually, she and I spend the fifteen-minute break discussing

what has transpired that morning. This informal approach to interviewing is particularly useful since I am studying her classroom for a lengthy period of time; I am not dependent on a single interview to collect information about the program. What works best for me is to use Patton's (1980) informal conversational technique. However, Spradley's (1980) more formal approach suits my purposes at times. Although I plan some of my questions as in the formal approach, most of my questions are triggered by the interviewee's responses or by a statement made in the conversation.

I began this informal interview over coffee one morning, as I do almost every morning, by using the informal conversational approach and asking an open-ended question. Actually, the interview began a few minutes before when Mrs. Johns shared something about a grandchild. We discussed grandchildren for awhile and then I said, "Tell me something about yourself." She said she was married and had five children who were grown and out on their own, except for a son who had sickle-cell anemia and lived with her. "I guess his wife left him," Mrs. Johns confided,

"because he was too much of a burden. He's a burden all right; he totaled my car last night!"

"Do you mind telling me more about yourself, a little about how you grew up, your education, and so on?" I persisted. She informed me she was a farm girl--that she grew up poor. She was one of nine children, and her responsibility was to fix everyone's plate at suppertime. "I well remember liftin' those pots and pourin' food onto everyone's plate. I hate to do that to this day. My husband, he's retired, and he still want me to fix his plate!"

"There were nine children," she continued. "The boys were whipped if they didn't stay in line, and the girls were constantly reminded to do their chores. It was a hard life," she admitted, "and I figured the only way out was to go to college. I didn't get to finish though, because I got married. I had four of our children before I was able to go back."

"What are some of your interests?" I asked.

"Reading and sewing," she replied as she pointed to the chair covers she had made for the classroom.

"What do you like to read?" I pressed.

"Novels, but I don't have the time to read like I used to," she confessed. "Nowadays, I mostly read the newspaper. That's all." This last statement provided me with an excellent opportunity to ask a question critical to my study.

"Do you think I could plan something for the children around books?" I asked.

"Yes," she says, "next week, we are going to start a unit on safety. We are going to study our first letter, 'p,' but you don't have to do just that letter. I liked the way you did the 'w' sound the other day. That's something I hadn't thought of," she mused.

#### A More Structured Interview

An example of Spradley's (1980) more formal approach to interviewing was used during the planning and follow-up sessions with the kindergarten teachers regarding the teacher demonstrations. The planning sessions were held at appointed times with agendas to follow. Although Mrs. Washington had refused the in-class coaching I had offered her, she attended the demonstrations and willfully participated in the planning and follow-up sessions.

During the follow-up session from a previous demonstration, Mrs. Alexander and Mrs. Johns had said that they would like to see storybooks used to teach math and science. In response to their request, I selected The Chocolate Chip Cookie by Mary Jane Everett and Campbell Kids' Cookbook by Campbell Soup Company to integrate bookreading with math and science. "We're going to do something unique on Thursday," I informed the teachers at our meeting. "If it's all right with you, I have asked a friend of mine, who is an author, to come to our demonstration to read one of her books to the children. She wrote a book about a chocolate chip cookie, and I thought we could use that book to talk about circles and shapes."

Mrs. Washington said, "Oh, my children would like that."

"Well," I offered, "since we used Mrs. Alexander's room last time, maybe we could use your... ."

"Oh, no!" interrupted Mrs. Washington, "If company's comin', I don't want to use my room for the first time [meaning the first time the author is here]."



Laughing, Mrs. Johns suggested, "Let's use Mrs. Alexander's room. She's been here the longest."

Mrs. Alexander smiled and said "okay."

I then explained that there were some things I was hoping to see, such as building upon the child's natural ability to tell stories; helping children learn how to ask questions about the story; helping them see that what they say can be written; and through environmental print, helping children see the function of print.

Mrs. Washington said, "Oh, yeah, they enjoy makin' pictures of their favorite thing from a story." The other teachers nodded in agreement. I then briefly explained the research that Heath (1983) had done on Black preschoolers' creativity with stories.

"She found that the parents did not read to their children," I informed the teachers. "In fact, the children weren't really included in conversations for teaching purposes. Heath tells the story of two-year-old Lem who finally got adults' attention by his creativity with language. According to Heath," I continued, "formulaic patterns and repetitive structures, like a poem or a chant, are characteristic

of a Black preschooler, and if this is so, we want to utilize this skill to teach our children how to write stories." I asked the teachers to observe the children drawing and telling about their pictures after Ms. Everett reads the story. I also told them that I wanted their reactions to the research.

Mrs. Washington said, "I seen that done at a whole language workshop, but I never used it with my kids. They ought to be able to do it though." Both Mrs. Johns and Mrs. Alexander agreed.

I suggested that as they observe the children at their writing tables, I would be setting up ingredients and utensils in the housekeeping center to make chocolate chip cookies to serve to the children and our guest. "Oh, boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Washington. Mrs. Johns laughed again.

Mrs. Alexander said, "I like the idea of serving food. I'll bring some punch."

I, then, explained that after most of the children had finished their pictures, I would announce that we were going to make cookies but needed a recipe, that is, directions to follow. I told the teachers that not only would I help the children mold the dough into

circles but that I would direct their attention to the ingredients listed on the chart. Also, as the cookies baked, I wanted the children to see the effects of heat on the softness of the dough.

The teachers were excited about planning this demonstration and particularly about planning it around food. I suggested that we comprise a committee and decide who should handle what. Mrs. Washington volunteered to make the invitations for the principal and ancillary staff members who would be interested in attending. Mrs. Johns volunteered to bring cooking utensils, and I volunteered to bring the ingredients. Mrs. Alexander said she had a toaster-oven in which to bake the cookies.

At the meeting following this teacher demonstration, I utilized a more formal type of interview since the issues to be discussed had been planned in advance. The meeting began with the teachers' sharing their enthusiasm about Ms. Everett and her ideas. "Do you know if it's possible," asked Mrs. Johns, "if I could get a copy of The Chocolate Chip Cookie?" I told the teachers that Ms. Everett would be delighted to make copies and even to autograph

them. I then asked what they thought about Heath's research.

Mrs. Washington said, "I don't know much about research, but what I do know is doze children loved dat story and eating doze cookies."

"I liked the way she told the children to write an ending to the story, like if they was afraid of the witch, they could draw an angel," remarked Mrs. Johns.

"I think the children get ideas when they listen to stories," offered Mrs. Alexander. I asked the teachers if they thought the children were creative with their stories. Mrs. Alexander said, "Rocky told me that his circle was a bike wheel and that it rolled over and over the ground to grandmamma's house and knocked her out of her chair!"

"Well, Heath said that children's stories were in the form of chants, poems, or rhymes," I reminded them, "and Rocky's story does have rhythm." The teachers laughed. "So," I asked, "can Heath's research be applied to the classroom setting?"

The teachers said yes.

"Do you think that you could just tell a child to write a story," I asked, "or would it be better to read

a story first and relate the events in the story to the child's experiences?"

Mrs. Washington exclaimed, "Oh, read the story. I just loved the way Ms. Everett varied her voice readin' dat story. She had those children in a trance."

I then asked the teachers what they thought about the children's reactions to measuring and baking the cookies. Mrs. Alexander said, "I liked the circles, but I particularly liked how you used numbers in the recipe."

"Yes," I agreed with her, "you don't need to trace numbers on worksheets to teach the concept of numbers, do you? Would you like to see numbers used with storybooks and other concrete objects in the next demonstration?" The teachers agreed, and we began to plan for the next teacher demonstration.

In becoming involved with the teachers, I used a combination of interviewing techniques. I interacted with the teachers and children through the spontaneous flow of conversational interviews, and I appointed times where issues that had been planned in advance were to be discussed.

### Researcher-designed Instrument

As was previously discussed, the ethnographer herself is an instrument in collecting and analyzing the data. Therefore, the best research strategy was for me to take advantage of the complete access I had to this kindergarten setting, participate in the daily activities with the teacher and children, write the field notes, and ask questions when the occasions arose. Thus, the major tools of this research were the interviews and field notes collected day by day, week by week, month by month.

Participating to such a high degree and working directly with the children allowed me to get to know them and their capabilities. In addition to Mrs. Johns' view of the children's home life, I wanted to extend my descriptions of them with their personal perspectives. Therefore, I designed a participant-construct instrument. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) stated that participant-construct instruments are used to discover the components of the participants' worlds and the constructs by which their worlds are structured. In other words, the way

children view their worlds is important in discovering their beliefs. Specifically, I used a projective technique with an accompanying interview. Since I did not have access to these children's homes, this instrument enabled the children to project through their drawings and conversations with me their views of home life.

In administering the technique, I asked the children to first tell me about themselves, about their mothers and fathers, and what they liked to do when they were not in school. I then asked them to draw a picture of their families. The following excerpts are some of the children's responses to the instrument including their drawings:

Biffie: "I like to play. I like to ride my bike. I like to ride my scooter. I like my walkin' doll and my talkin' doll. I like school. I like to write my name. Miss Nancy," she whispers, "can you show me how to write my last name? My mamma not teachin' me a lot, just a little bit." Biffie's drawing is of her mother, her two fathers, and their house. "The father who doesn't work lives with me," she says.

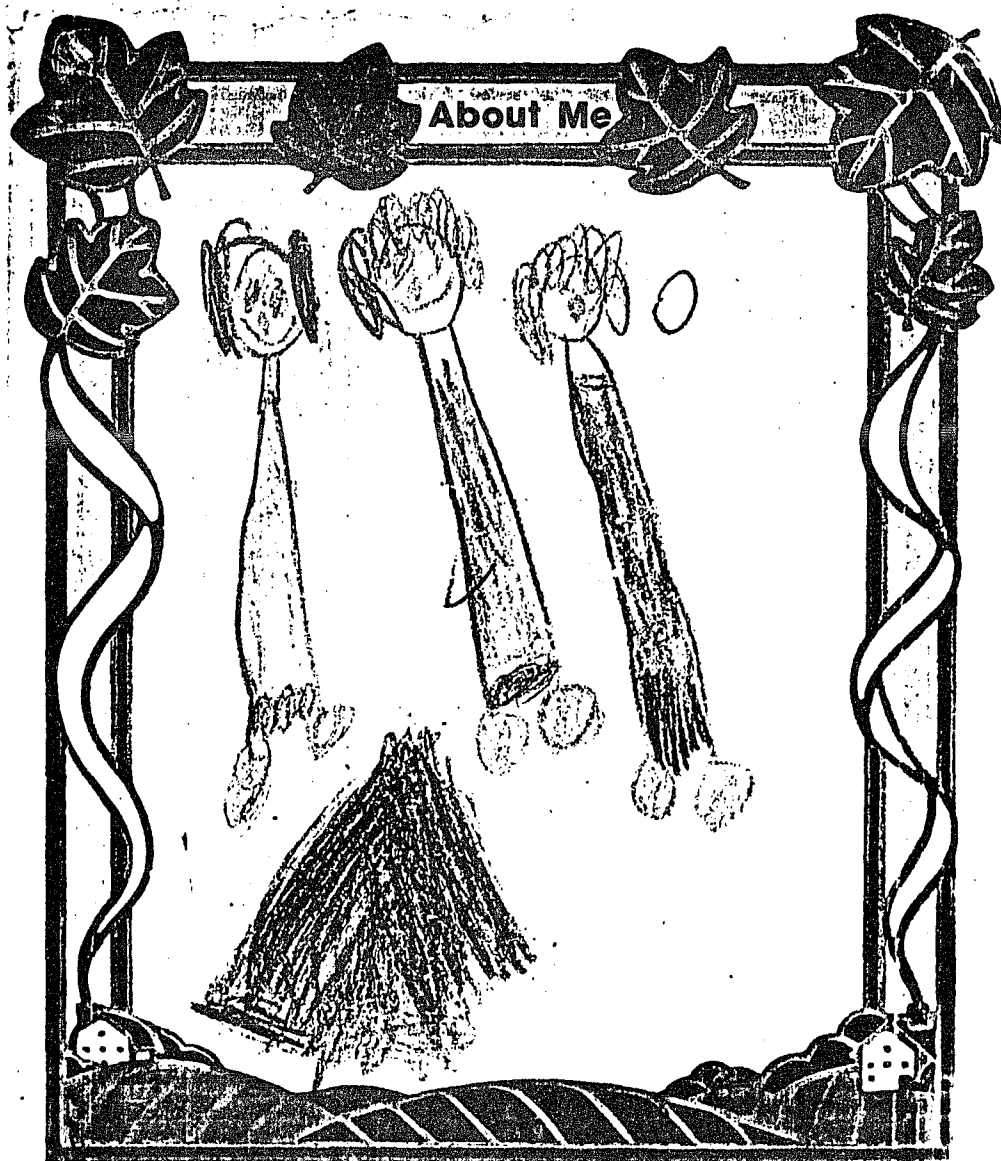


Figure 2. Biffie's drawing.

Stovall: "I like to ride my horse. I like school. I like gumbo and sausage. I don't have no daddy. I live with my mamma, my cousins, and my auntie. My auntie, she drive my mamma's car. She drive me to the store



and bought me some doughnuts!" In his picture, are the people he has named, the car, and the store with the two doughnuts in it.

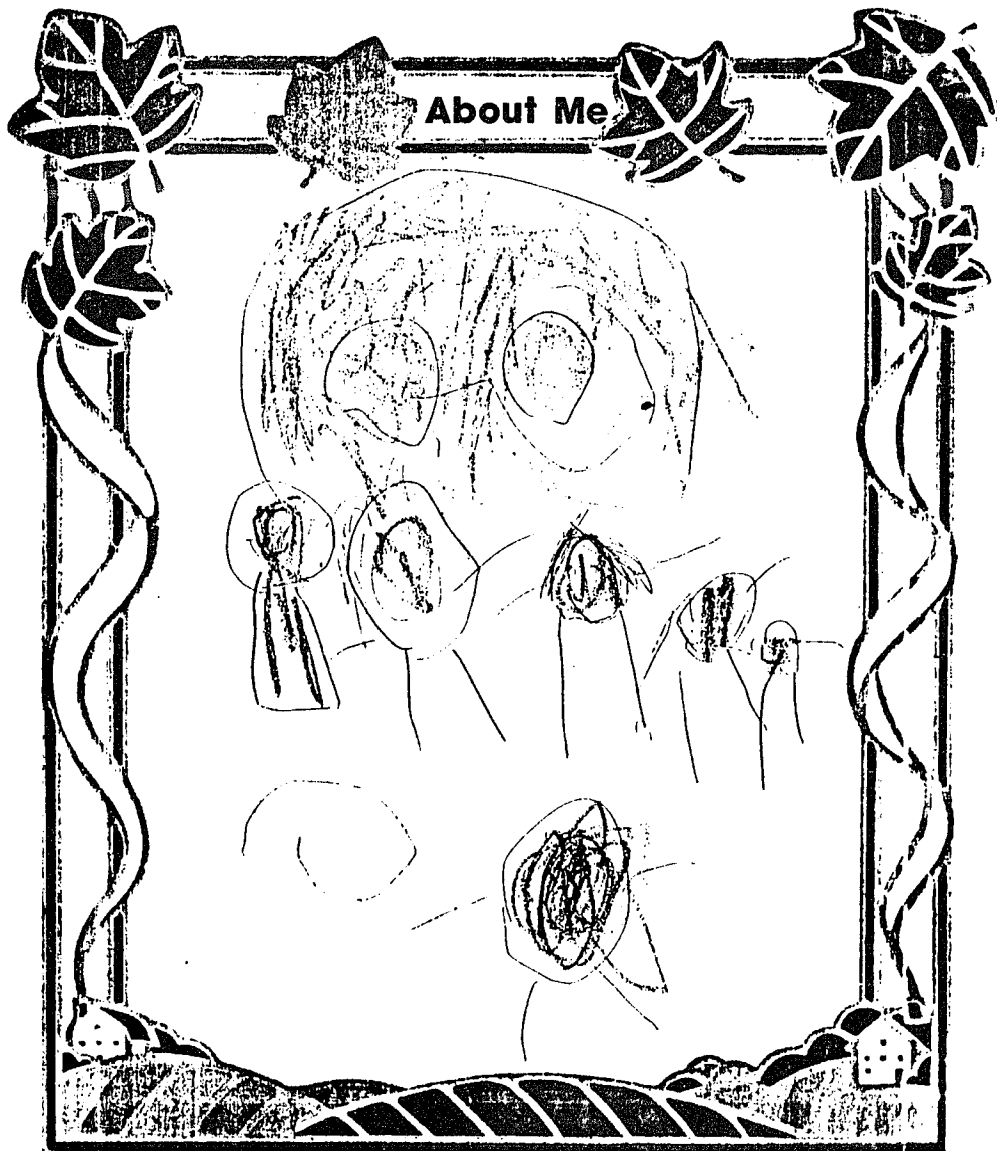


Figure 3. Stovall's drawing.

In contrast to the other children's complete sentences, when I ask Leo what he likes to do at home, his eyes grow big and still. "Color," he says. In his picture, he puts two boxes and colors them yellow. I ask if one of the boxes is his house. "No, it a rectangle," he says.

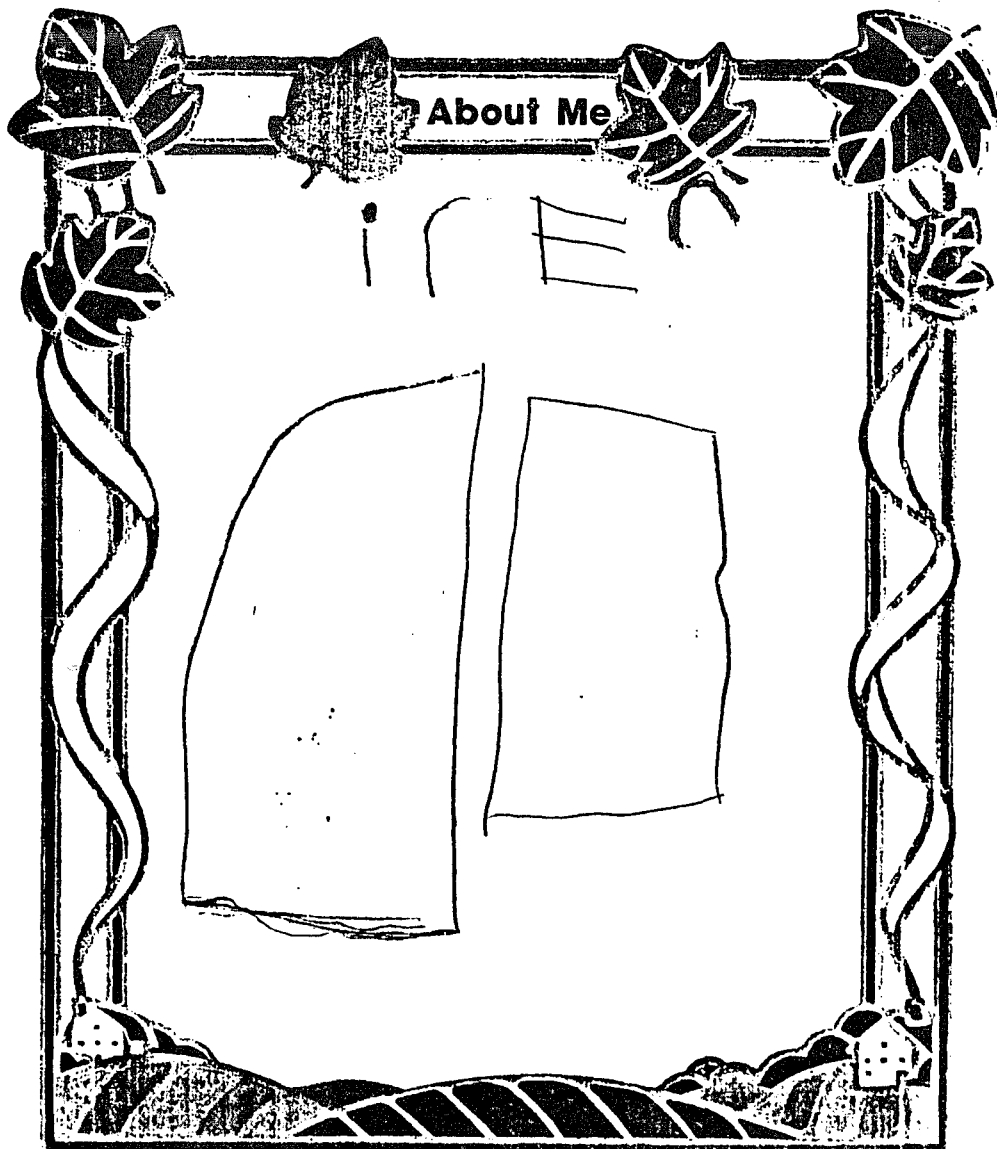


Figure 4. Leo's drawing.

Jesse: "I like my girlfriend. She be chasin' me on the playground. I like football. I like basketball. My daddy, he own a hardware store, and my mamma work there. I have an older sister, too." Jesse's drawing is of his sister and himself. "Miss Nancy," he says, "look at dis purple dress I make for my sister."

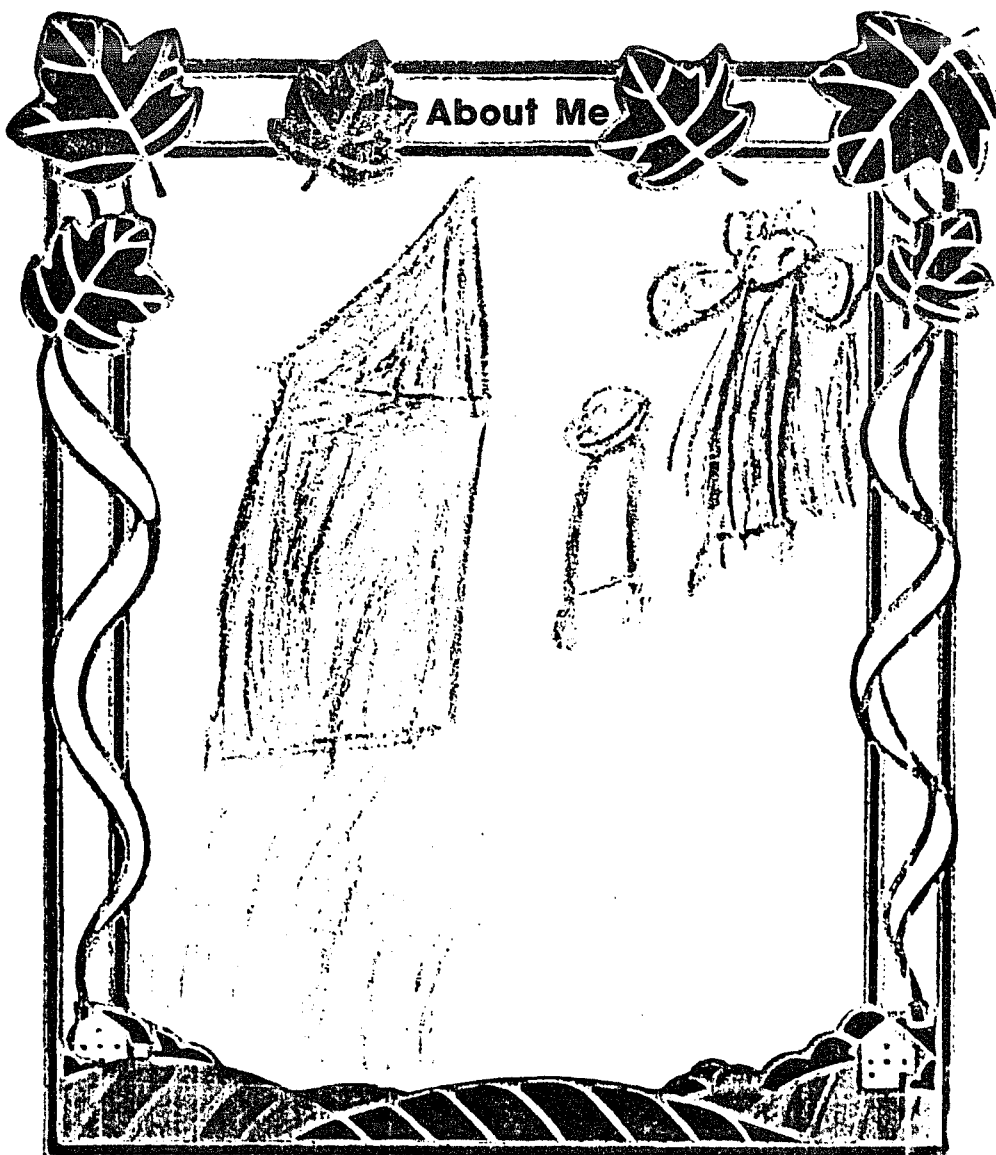


Figure 5. Jesse's drawing.

The drawings of Jason, Patrick, Katie, Jesse, Shalindra, and Michael (see Appendix D) reveal that these children have both parents living at home and that they are employed with the exception of Katie's mother who volunteers her time in the school. Although these parents reportedly work, their jobs must be low-paying or seasonal since all the children, except Patrick, receive free lunch. Like Biffie's father, Tiffany's and Darilyn's fathers, although living at home, do not work. Tykesha's father lives "way far away," she says.

An additional researcher-designed instrument used was a print-awareness procedure to be described in Chapter Four. This procedure allowed the children to interact with me about the functions of print. We talked about words in a favorite storybook, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?. Using letters and sounds as a cuing system, the children tried to recognize these same words in a different context. Using this book, which was read to the children in the early part of the study and reread throughout the study, I was able to watch the children grow in their literacy skills.

In summary, my procedure in collecting the data for this ethnography was to take field notes on as many things happening in the classroom that I possibly could. I was careful to record activities and behaviors for research purposes and attend to things the ordinary observer would not. To accomplish this task, notes often had to be taken in abbreviated form and expanded when I left the field for the day. In addition to field notes, I conducted interviews with the teachers and children. Some of my conversational interviews with the children were assessed in the light of researcher-designed instruments, such as a participant-construct instrument and a print-awareness procedure. The children's and teacher's interviews and conversations were recorded as verbatim statements. In assessing or analyzing the fieldwork, field notes, interviews, and researcher-designed instruments were used.

#### Analysis

Patton (1980) has described analyzing the data as a slow process requiring hours of careful work, going over the field notes, looking for patterns, checking emergent patterns against the data, and making linkages

among the various parts of the data. The analysis is inductive in that "they [recurring themes] emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them [the data] prior to data collection and analysis" (p. 306). While working inductively, I looked for emerging themes and patterns of recurring behaviors since the repetitiveness of a behavior alerts the ethnographer to the potential significance of that behavior. However, it is important to remember that in ethnography, the findings do not center on a final paper--the final report is part of a total utilization process" (p. 296).

Spradley (1980) reported that the data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous and that sitting down to make sense out of pages of field notes can be overwhelming. To avoid this frustration, he suggested making an analysis of the data every two weeks. "It is important to think of this section in your fieldwork notebook as a place to 'think on paper' about the culture under consideration" (p. 72).

At two-week intervals, I made preliminary analyses of emergent patterns that were either reinforced or

discarded after more data had been collected. The following is an example of an early analysis.

In reading one of the school's documents, I discovered that early intervention was a strategy the school advocated. Heath (1983) observed that if intervention can occur at the preschool or kindergarten age, the potential for development of literacy skills necessary for economic and social advancement is excellent, in contrast to attempting remediation for children later in their academic learning. From my observations to date, Michael was an example of a confident student. Although not as advanced in literacy skills as some of the other children, Michael was excited about school. He participated and interacted, attempted to answer a lot of questions, and communicated well with his teacher and peers. After more focused observations, it will be interesting to see if Michael's strengths were capitalized upon and a positive attitude was

maintained or if his weaknesses were reinforced and creativity squelched.

### Coding Categories

Patton (1980) reported that in getting started on the analysis, he reads through all the field notes and makes comments in the margins that then can be organized into categories. He also suggested having more than one person classify the data into the established categories. Therefore, I asked my major professor, my professor of research, and another doctoral student, all of whom had visited the project site, to code the data into a set of categories that I had defined. I based my classification of categories on a system proposed by Guba (1978):

The second observer ought to be able to verify that, (a) the categories make sense in view of the data which are available, and (b) the data have been appropriately arranged in the category system...that viewed internally, the individual categories should appear to be consistent; viewed externally, the set of categories should seem to comprise a whole.

(p. 56)



Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) suggested that after having generated the preliminary categories, the ethnographer assigns the categories numbers and then reads through the data once again and assigns the numbers to units of data. (By units of data, the researchers are referring to fragments of field notes and interviews that could be classified under a particular topic represented by the coding system.) In this way, my first attempt in assigning coding categories to the data was actually a test to discover the workability of the categories created. Then, the coding categories could be modified and/or new ones developed (see Appendix C).

Guba (1978) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) emphasized that the categories should encompass topics for which the ethnographer has the most substantiation as well as topics he or she wants to explore. My topics included: (a) teacher's imitating the teacher demonstrations, (b) children's acquisition of literacy skills, (c) children's display of symptoms of stress, (d) teacher's use of teaching practices, (e) teacher's use of developmentally inappropriate practices of rote learning and drill, and (f) teacher's use of affective

behavior. These topics represented the areas I wanted to explore and received the most substantiation when I checked the data for emerging patterns and concurred with the other persons classifying the data.

The codings of Doctors Richardson and Charlesworth paralleled the codings that I had determined. I found this concurrence significant since these judges represented different academic disciplines. Both researchers were consistent with their codings of behaviors. Thus, the insights of the research team were supportive of the major patterns that recurred throughout the data. Spradley (1980) said the key to understanding lies in the recurring patterns in the data.

#### Validity and Reliability

The interviews; researcher-designed instruments; and field notes, descriptive and focused, triangulate the data collected. A coding procedure also permitted inter-rater reliability. This triangulation undergirds the validity and reliability of the study (Patton, 1980).

Pelto and Pelto (1978) have reported that ethnographers invest much effort in their field

research to achieve validity, for it is generally assumed that "a long-term stay in a community facilitates the differentiation of what is valid from what is not" (p. 33). Regarding reliability, Pelto and Pelto have noted that certain types of interview procedures used by anthropologists have been demonstrated to produce the same range of responses on repeated trials, even with different interviewers but cautioned that there are types of situations in which even structured interviews produce varied data depending on the style of the interviewer and the context in which the interviews take place.

Pelto and Pelto (1978) have pointed out that researchers have tried to maximize validity and reliability through the use of combined research methods. The blending of relatively long-term observations and nonstructured interviews (high validity because of more genuine responses) with more structured interviews and other researcher-designed instruments increases reliability. Participants' verbatim statements increase validity.

In the present ethnography, I used both structured and nonstructured interviews. In addition, I combined

the interviews, researcher-designed instruments, and coding constructs from a long-term (three-months) study to achieve reasonably valid insights regarding the classroom setting under investigation which, depending on the judgment of the consumer, could be transferred to another classroom setting consisting of a similar population.

#### Limitations of the Study

Like other ethnographies, the findings of this study are intended to be descriptive of the setting observed. The study is intended to be informative in providing ideas that students interested in studying the literacy process in action could use. Many features of the research design could be adapted by other ethnographers and qualitative researchers, especially those who are studying low socio-economic preschool and elementary school settings.

At Carver, I was a White researcher observing students' acquisition of literacy skills and their stress-related behaviors. I also observed instructional behaviors of the classroom teacher. At the teacher's request, I shared some of my knowledge about integrating storyreading with enhancing the

children's literacy skills. Although I was hopeful that the teacher would adopt some of my ideas and from looking at the data, it appears as if she did, I cannot say that these changes occurred because of my intervention. Some other form of instruction could have accounted for behavior changes in the teacher, just as maturation could have accounted for some of the behavior change in the children.

In one sense, the time frame was a limitation of the study. If I had studied the children into the spring semester, I would have observed their further acquisition of literacy skills. Yet, in another sense, observing a classroom every morning for three months may be more time than most researchers could give. Additionally, the open and complete access I had to the school was a condition not always available to researchers.

Another limitation to the study was the fact that I did not have access to the children's homes. Ward (1971) studied the home life of lower socio-economic Black children, and Rosenfeld (1971) studied the classroom life of lower-class Black children. To have had access to both home and school life, as Heath

(1983) had, would have provided an even richer context in which to gain insight about the literacy development in environments where stressful situations are likely to occur. In my classroom setting, the children's behaviors were symptomatic of stress. Access to their homes would have provided further insight into the possible causes of stress.

## CHAPTER IV

### Findings

The narrative that follows is a chronological account, extracted directly from my field notes, of what occurred in Mrs. Johns' classroom on the designated dates followed by commentaries on the findings. These dates are selected to present the reader with examples which illustrate the development of the kindergarten students' literacy skills and stress-related behaviors and the development of a teacher's instructional behavior, all of which occur over time. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have reported that the temporal emergence of a social process is a prominent theme in many texts based on ethnographic work. "It is thus highly appropriate that such arguments should, at least in part, be presented through a temporal unfolding that follows and recounts such a process of 'becoming'" (p. 219).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) also state that "the unfolding of the text can be made to parallel the passage of time as experienced by the actors and the main phases of a socialization process. The

segmentation of the analysis, and of the text, may follow organizationally" (p. 218)... .

In this chapter, the text, which parallels the passage of time, is segmented by a commentary, which contains the findings or analyses of the text. Presenting the text first leads to the analysis reported on in the commentary, for in ethnography, identifying patterns of behavior is inductive in that the patterns emerge out of the data (or text) rather than being imposed on the data prior to the analysis (Patton, 1980). This methodology is in contrast to deductive methodologies where a theoretical framework is imposed on the data before findings are reported.

#### Presentation of Data

##### Monday, September 25, 1989: Pre-demonstration

9:10 a.m. The children are seated Indian-style, that is, on the floor with legs crossed, in their usual whole group arrangement. Mrs. Johns, sitting in a chair making the circle almost complete, informs them that they are going to hear the story of The Three Little Pigs. (I am excited that at last Mrs. Johns is going to read them a story.) "Suppose you were going to build a house," she explains. "Here are some



materials you could use." She has brought a brick, some sticks, and a zip-lock bag of pine straw. She stresses that she wants them to listen to see which material would make the strongest house. Then she takes the record player off the shelf and puts on a record of The Three Little Pigs. (I am disappointed.) The children grow quiet as they listen. Their eyes grow big, and one can tell that they are interested. Standing up, Mrs. Johns starts huffing and puffing with the wolf. She makes a sweep with her arm as if to go down into the chimney and plops her hand like it had actually fallen into a pot of boiling water. Shalindra inquires in earnest, "Does it hurt?"

9:25 a.m. Mrs. Johns, smiling with quizzical eyes, turns off the record and asks, "Now, what material did the first little pig use to build his house?"

Tiffany answers "straw."

"That's right," says Mrs. Johns, "do you think his house will be the strongest?" "No!" answer most of the children. "Jason, why do you think the straw house will not be so strong?" she asks. Jason doesn't answer.

Rising to his knees and stretching, Jesse, a repeater, simply says, "'Cause straw is soft!"

"What happened in the first part of the story?" asks Mrs. Johns.

Stovall, a slower student, says, "He was tryin' to blow the house down."

"Is that what happened in the first part?" quizzes his teacher. "Do you know, Patrick?" He doesn't answer.

Rising again, this time lifting his hands as if he were going to perform, Jesse says, "He built a straw house."

"Yes," exclaims Mrs. Johns applauding, "let's give Jesse a butterfly clap!" The children wiggle their fingers silently like a butterfly flapping its wings.

"What happened in the second part of the story?" continues Mrs. Johns. No answer. Jesse and Patrick are trying to decide if it's the wood house or the brick house. Mrs. Johns furnishes enough clues until Biffie and Shalindra volunteer that the second house is wood. "Then the little pigs went to the brick house, didn't they?" asks their teacher. "But why?" she queries.

"'Cause they were safe," answers Patrick.

"That's right!" says Mrs. Johns. "Why were they safe?" she persists.

"Because the brick is too hard!" exclaims Jason.

"Why yes," says Mrs. Johns in agreement. "Which house would catch on fire easy then?"

"The straw house!" most of the children shout in unison.

9:35 a.m. Switching the subject slightly, Mrs. Johns announces, "Today, I'm going to say some things that are real and some things that are make-believe."

"Like when we pretended we were cars?" asks Jason, remembering the Safety in our Community game they had played last week.

"That's right," nods Mrs. Johns. "Now, when I say a sentence that is real, shut your eyes. When I say a sentence that is make-believe, blink your eyes. You know: open and shut them."

"Like a butterfly kiss?" asks Biffie raising her eyebrows.

Seemingly ignoring the question, Mrs. Johns proceeds with the activity. "Ready?" she asks. "Can a man build a ...?" Biffie slips away from the circle

and wanders over to a nearby table. "See, Biffie knows what to do, but she isn't doing it!" reprimands Mrs. Johns. Hanging her head, Biffie stands frozen like a statue.

"Can a man build a brick house?" resumes Mrs. Johns. Most of the children shut their eyes. "Good," she says.

9:45 a.m. "What other kinds of buildings besides houses are in our community, Tykesha?" asks Mrs. Johns. Tykesha doesn't answer. Jason says stores. "In our community," explains their teacher, "we have a post office. How many of you know where---Shalindra, get up and come over here because you constantly talk. That's what you did last year, waste too much time talkin'!" By now, several children are talking. Sighing, Mrs. Johns sinks into her chair and calls for a bathroom break.

#### Commentary

A pattern emerging in the data is that Mrs. Johns' use of questions dominate classroom talk. In a similar setting, Heath (1982) has reported that the predominant type of question used called for the direct feedback of information. Other question types called for analysis,

synthesis, or evaluation of lesson data. Unlike the teachers in Heath's study, the majority of Mrs. Johns' questions are of the analytical or evaluative type:

1. Why do you think the straw house will not be strong?
2. What happened in the first part of the story?
3. What happened in the second part of the story?
4. Why did the little pigs go to the brick house?
5. Why were they safe?
6. Which house would catch on fire easily?

Although, Mrs. Johns asked questions read directly from the basal, these questions were of the evaluative and critical type. They required critical thinking and judgment on the part of the student since the answer was not explicitly stated in the record's version of the story.

Of particular importance in Heath's (1982) study is attention to types of questions used in the classroom as compared with those used in the homes of the children from Black working-class families. In studying the kinds of questions parents ask, Heath has observed that middle- and upper-class parents frequently ask higher-order questions, such as "why?"

questions. In lower-class settings, parents ask more literal-type questions and sometimes no questions at all. Therefore, for most of Mrs. Johns' kindergartners, this is their first experience with school questioning. The following are responses to the above questions.

1. Mrs. Johns calls on Jason who does not answer. Jesse, a repeater, does.

2. Stovall tells about another part in the story, rather than about the one which is asked. Patrick, who is called upon, does not answer. Jesse finally does.

3. No one answers this question. Mrs. Johns gives clues until someone does.

4. Mrs. Johns provides the answer.

5. Jason correctly answers the question.

6. Most of the children answer this question.

In observing classrooms, Heath (1982) has noted that questions asking for performance of a specific skill emerged as particularly significant. For example, "what is the story about" demands a specific skill. Not surprisingly, the lower socio-economic student is unfamiliar with the skill. The wording of

this question makes it even more difficult since the children in this kindergarten setting, like those in Heath's study, may be used to hearing in their community: "What is the story like?" For example, when asked, "What's Doug's car like?", four-year-old Lem replies, "Like a flat tire, never fixed" (Heath, 1982, p. 209). Ong (1970) informs us that the Black culture, oral for so long, relied on metaphorical language to aid in recall. However, the subtle differences between the two questions, "like" and "about," are such that a little understanding on the part of the classroom teacher could bridge the gap (Heath, 1982).

Bridging the gap is analogous to what Vygotsky (1978) has termed scaffolding. Both are ladders to assisting the child. For example, if a child is unsure of the meaning of a word, he or she is in an interpsychological relationship with an adult present who assists the child with meaning. Once the child understands the meaning, the scaffolding is no longer needed, and the relationship becomes an intrapsychological one. In other words, the child has internalized the meaning of the word.

Thus, a recurring pattern in the behavior of Mrs. Johns is the scaffolding she provides for the children. For example, when she asks, "What happened in the second part of the story?," the answer she is looking for is "the second little pig builds his house out of wood." No one answers the question immediately, but Jesse, Patrick, Biffie, and Shalindra are trying to decide if the house is wood or brick. Mrs. Johns furnishes enough clues, such as "this material is similar to straw but is harder" and "some of your houses may be built out of this," until the children come up with the answer. Because of the scaffolding Mrs. Johns has provided, children understand that wood is harder than straw but softer than brick. For now, they no longer need their teacher's assistance to explain that concept.

Tuesday, September 26, 1989: Pre-demonstration

9:10 a.m. "I'm going to play this record again today," announces Mrs. Johns, "but I want you to listen carefully to the story because I'm going to ask you some questions at the end." She turns on the record. Shalindra is pulling on my skirt. Patrick and Jason are watching as I write. Tiffany and Biffie are



talking to each other. Michael takes off the black leather jacket he wears every day. Jesse and Darilyn are clapping to the music. The needle sticks, and Mrs. Johns takes off the record.

9:20 a.m. "Which little pig builds the strongest house?" she asks.

"The one who had the bricks," answers Jason.

"Is that the first, second, or third little pig?" asks Mrs. Johns.

Biffie blurts out, "The third!"

"Biffie, you're still a four-year-old because you talk instead of think!" scolds Mrs. Johns. "Now, what did the third pig use to build his house?" asks Mrs. Johns. Biffie raises her hand and is called on to answer the question.

9:25 a.m. "Boys and girls, we want to think about our houses and what we can do to keep our houses safe from fire," explains their teacher.

"I used to live in a brick house," says Tiffany.

"No," clarifies Mrs. Johns, "what can we do to keep our houses safe?" Stovall, remembering to raise his hand, tries to answer. However, Jesse and Shalindra are lying down, Patrick is yawning, Tykesha is rolling

on her stomach, and Jason asks to go to the bathroom. "Too many people are talking!" explodes Mrs. Johns. "I can't hear nobody! Say what now?" Mrs. Johns' voice sounds stuck like the needle on the record.

"I'd run out of my house if it caught on fire," says Tiffany.

"I'd jump out the window!" says Biffie.

"I'd jump on my horse!" cries Stovall.

"You have a horse?" asks Mrs. Johns.

"Yeah, in Chicago," he replies.

"So you'd run to Chicago if your house caught on fire?" she asks incredulously.

When the children go out for recess, Mrs. Johns and I converse about the morning's events. I can tell that she is "on edge" about the proceedings in her classroom. My perception is that part of the problem is not only the children's behavior, but mine as well. After all, I sit in her classroom every day and take notes. Today, Shalindra played with my skirt, and Patrick and Jason watched as I wrote. I am not a great distraction in the classroom. Nonetheless, I am a distraction.

With this in mind, I gently ask Mrs. Johns if I can be more of a participant in the classroom--if I can, perhaps, plan something for the children around storybooks. She seems pleased with the idea. "Yes," she says smiling in a relaxed way, "that way you'll get to know the children better, too." Feeling relief, I tell her I will start immediately and that since this bookreading demonstration is just for her class, we will call it a pilot demonstration.

#### Commentary

A recurring pattern in some of the children's behavior is symptomatic of stress. According to Burts et al. (1990a), stress-related behaviors can be passive behaviors such as boredom, refusal to cooperate, and non-responsiveness. Aggressive behaviors, such as arguing and disruptive talking, may be stress-related behaviors that lead to chaos.

Using the operational definition of stress behaviors in the Burts et al. study (1990a), I have observed some of the children displaying passive and aggressive behaviors that are symptomatic of stress: gazing around the room, yawning, lying down or rolling when seated on the floor for whole group instruction,

withdrawing, manipulating clothing, leaving the group, talking inappropriately, touching inappropriately, fussing with others, getting in front of others in the group, and inappropriately seeking the teacher's attention. When Mrs. Johns plays the record a second time, Shalindra touches my skirt, Tiffany and Biffie talk inappropriately, Michael plays with his jacket, and Jesse and Darilyn clap disruptively to the music. When Mrs. Johns repeats the discussion on safety, Jesse and Shalindra lie down, Patrick yawns, Tykesha rolls on the floor, Shalindra "fusses" with Tiffany, and Jason asks to go to the bathroom.

Are these children bored, have they been sitting too long, or do they come from homes without rules? "At storytime or in the times when the teacher gathered the students on the rug about her to talk to the group as a whole, the children from Trackton [the name of the Black community] interrupted, tried to 'take the floor,' and chattered freely to their neighbors...even the most patient teachers found it hard not to question the 'kinds of homes these students come from...'" (Heath, 1983, p. 280). In one of our conversational interviews, Mrs. Johns remarked that "these children

come from 'broken' homes where there is a TV in every room but not a single time for family meals. A lot of these children are latch-key children," she said. "They don't see their mammas and daddies 'til dark. They [the children] eat and sleep at will." Perhaps, because of the lack of constraints in the children's lives at home, directives in the classroom have no real meaning.

Burts et al. (1990b) have found that lower socio-economic Black children exhibit more total stress than lower socio-economic White children and higher socio-economic Black children in inappropriate classrooms versus appropriate classrooms during periods of waiting, whole group instruction, and workbook/worksheet activities. They have found that males appear to be more susceptible to stress than females and that boys in inappropriate classrooms display more total stress behaviors than boys in appropriate classrooms. Therefore, the boys (Jesse, Patrick, Michael, Stovall, Leo, and Jason) may have a particularly difficult time adjusting to long periods of developmentally inappropriate activity.

In addition to experiencing a more restrictive regimentation in the classroom than in the home, children's encountering factual narratives as opposed to storytelling or storybooks may account for some of the stress-related behaviors. Unaccustomed to factual, straightforward stories about safety in the community, some children may experience boredom (e.g., Jesse's lying down, Patrick's yawning) which are passive behaviors symptomatic of stress (Burts et al., 1990a). In Trackton, good storytellers may originate their story in an actual event, but details surrounding the event are highly embellished (Heath, 1983). When Trackton children go to school, they encounter a different kind of story from the one told at home. Naturally, they encounter fictive stories, which are read aloud to them and which they "enjoy and respond enthusiastically to" (p. 297), but they also encounter factual narratives which are foreign to them.

"Boys and girls," addresses Mrs. Johns, "we want to think about our houses and what we can do to keep our houses safe from fire." This is the third time in two days that Mrs. Johns has made an attempt to address safety. The children probably know by now that the

content of this topic is factual, unlike the exaggerated storytelling which they prefer:

"If my house caught on fire, I'd jump on my horse," brags Stovall.

"You have a horse?" asks his teacher.

"Yeah, in Chicago," he says.

Therefore, it is not only the absence of rules in the homes these children come from, but also the failure of the traditional school curriculum to meet the needs of the lower-class Black child. Addressing safety in the community by reading from the basal and asking the questions that are listed in the basal may not be relevant to these children. According to Heath (1983), teachers have to adjust some of their teaching habits, but the intervention is not one-way: For the lower-class Black child to succeed academically, he or she has to learn the rules of traditional classroom usage.

Another important factor in reducing stress is the physical layout of space. Stress can be induced when the space is rigid, poorly organized, or otherwise inadequate (Swick, 1987). Mrs. Johns' classroom is spacious, attractive, and well organized; but the

children's seating arrangement is inadequate in that all children sit in the same cross-legged position for long periods of time. Swick (1987) reminds us that sitting longer than fifteen minutes is stressful for the young child. The issue of time is also addressed by Burts et al. (1990a, 1990b). In these studies, differences were found in frequency of activities between appropriate and inappropriate classrooms. The use of learning centers and more storybook reading were found in the appropriate classrooms, while more whole group instruction and workbook/worksheet activities were found in the inappropriate classrooms.

On Monday, the day the children first listened to The Three Little Pigs, all were seated in the usual semi-circle arrangement by 9:10 a.m. and were still sitting, without relief, at 9:45 a.m. When the children listened to the record a second time, they sat in the same fixed position from 9:10 until 9:30 a.m. when stress-related behaviors began to occur, such as lying down, yawning, and rolling on the stomach. At that point, Mrs. Johns called for a bathroom break.

Rigidity of space does not provide opportunities for developing individuality or creativity (Swick,



1987). Heath (1983) has reported that the Trackton community belongs to a culture steeped in creativity, a large part of which has its roots in storytelling. At about two years of age, the Trackton child repeats adults' utterances and uses them in a creative way. It is the child's creativity with language that allows him to enter adult conversations. According to Heath, metaphorical language and formulaic patterns are characteristic of the Black preschooler.

If confining the child to a limited spatial context inhibits creativity, as Swick (1987) suggests it does, then asking the lower socio-economic Black child to sit still and adhere to specific rules, while presenting factual accounts of information, is to impose a lifestyle vastly different from what he or she is accustomed to. In the adjustment, stress is likely to occur (Charlesworth, 1987).

Again, the gap between the randomness of rules in their home life and the imposing of regimentation in school life can be bridged if the teacher implements appropriate practices and uses expected behavior. Honig (1986) has suggested that adults can help young children by protecting them. That is, adults can

protect children by making the environment as low-stress as possible. To eliminate unhealthy stress for students, the teacher may effectively build a relationship by modeling appropriate behaviors (Bredekamp, 1987). For example, when Stovall walks in late, Mrs. Johns handles the situation appropriately by saying, "I'm so glad you're here, darlin'. Where have you been?" "Nuttin'" he replies, meaning nowhere. "It's raining today, and you couldn't get to school, could you?" she asks, reassuring him it is okay to be late since the tardiness is probably out of his control.

However, Mrs. Johns' behavior is not always consistent. That is, all the children are not praised for the same responses or punished for the same offenses all of the time. The behavior of the teacher can impinge on the child's opportunity for developing self-esteem (McCracken, 1986). For example, when Mrs. Johns tells the class to blink their eyes, "you know: open and shut them," Biffie asks, "Like a butterfly kiss?" Ignoring her, Mrs. Johns resumes the activity. Biffie leaves the group and wanders to a table. "See, Biffie knows what to do [meaning to sit in the circle]

but isn't doing it," reprimands her teacher. Lowering her head, Biffie moves her finger back and forth on the table. Her withdrawal and repetitive hand movement are behaviors symptomatic of stress (Burts et al., 1990a, 1990b).

As Mrs. Johns informs the children about "safety in our community," Shalindra's inappropriate talking becomes disruptive. "Shalindra, get up and come over here because you constantly talk. That's what you did last year--waste too much time talking!" Later, Mrs. Johns shared with me that she had heard a "motivational speaker" at the faculty meeting and repeaters like Shalindra came to mind. "The speaker was good, real good, and I'm gonna try to let Shalindra know she can do the work," declares Mrs. Johns enthusiastically. However, the well-meaning lines of communication between Mrs. Johns and Shalindra, as well as with other students, like Biffie, break down as Mrs. Johns returns to her habits of negative talk. Perhaps the key to her use of this type of behavior lies in her past. While Mrs. Johns has become educated and risen somewhat above her background, the situation she overcame subconsciously may restrict her from breaking this

pattern (Wilcox, 1982). In other words, she, too, is a product of the children's social environment or at least, a similar one, and the inappropriate comments could be self-experienced. "We grew up poor," says Mrs. Johns. "The boys were whipped if they didn't stay in line, and the girls were constantly reminded to do their chores."

I can only infer that negative talk was a part of Mrs. Johns' childhood. However, this behavior would be congruent with Ward's (1971) study of a rural lower socio-economic Black community. Ward has reported that the children were treated and talked to harshly and that adults' behavior toward children was inconsistent.

Wednesday, September 27, 1989: Pilot Demonstration

9:00 a.m. The children amble in from breakfast as Mrs. Johns collects the doughnut money and calls the roll. "Here go my doughnut money; here go my movie money. My mamma say she gonna pay [the rest] next week!" declares Stovall, thrusting a crumpled envelope into Mrs. Johns' hand. Katie, who has been absent for four days, has returned.

"Katie, you must come to school. You're a real leader," praises Mrs. Johns. "Let's do our counting

today." All the children, except Tykesha and Leo, are counting. "You not countin', Tykesha," remarks Mrs. Johns. As the children get into the sixties and seventies, they look to Katie for help. "Is Katie the only one who knows her numbers? We say them everyday," sighs their teacher. After the children recite numbers, the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year, and pledge allegiance--all in rote fashion, Mrs. Johns instructs them to sit in their circle, a behavior they now perform like robots, and to sit still while I do something special with them.

9:15 a.m. First, I related to the children's lives some items from the story, Paddy Finds a Job, a wordless picture book by John Goodall. I explained that Paddy Pig wanted to be a waiter in a restaurant. Through a discussion of McDonald's, Super Burger, and Sweep-a-Burger, we established an understanding of what a restaurant was. I explained that the restaurant in this story was a fancy one and that the owner wore a suit. Even to be a waiter, Paddy had to wear a bow-tie. He waited on a couple dressed in their finest: Mrs. Dog, who had draped a fur about her neck and Mr. Wolf, who was wearing a black coat. In taking

drinks to the couple's table, Paddy's feet got caught in the fur wrap. When he turned to leave, he dragged Mrs. Dog with him, and they both crashed into the dessert cart. Furiously, Mr. Wolf chased Paddy through the kitchen and out the restaurant door.

I reviewed with the children what happened first, second, third, and so on. I then asked Stovall to read, that is, to retell the story. He covered all the main events and told the story almost as I did. He thought he was reading; then all of the children wanted to "read."

To reinforce the concepts of first, next, and last, an appropriate extension activity was to reenact the story. I asked Jason to be Paddy. (I had a bow-tie for him.) Darilyn was Mrs. Dog (I had a scarf with tassels for her.), and Jesse was Mr. Wolf. (I had a black coat for him.) A paper bag, with edges rolled up, placed on Stovall's head made him the chef. Patrick served as the restaurant owner. The remaining students dined at tables in the classroom and acted as customers. This extension activity, which was repeated with roles exchanged, resulted in being the highlight of the demonstration. Almost all the children

remembered the story's events in the exact sequence that they occurred.

The following day, I repeated the pilot demonstration as an official demonstration for the kindergarten teachers. Using Mrs. Alexander's children, the learning environment was made true to life. The teachers could not only see how to administer a particular technique but knew whether the technique worked. The only question was would they themselves reap the same success? Therefore, I helped the teachers, who were willing, carry out the procedures in their classrooms. Mrs. Alexander needed little encouragement or assistance, and I could tell that she was eager and confident she could achieve the same results. On the other hand, Mrs. Washington, who attended the demonstrations, made no comments. (I could tell from the screaming that could be heard from behind her closed door that little, if any, appropriate methodology was being carried out.) When I asked "In what additional ways could I help," she said nothing.

#### Commentary

A recurring pattern in the behavior of the children is that they were learning a literacy-specific

skill: the reenactment of stories to enhance story recall.

While narratives can, of course, have quite complex structures, researchers generally agree that the structure of a basic or simple story includes six components: setting, initiating event, response, obstacle, action, and resolution (McGee & Richgels, 1986). Story structure instruction has taken several forms. Kindergarten students from lower socio-economic backgrounds have been indirectly instructed in the important components of story structure through carefully prepared discussion followed by practice in retelling (Morrow, 1987; Pellegrini & Galda, 1982). Pellegrini and Galda have reported that enacting specific play roles where the child's own language is used seems to have a direct effect on the child's ability to reconstruct and comprehend a story.

Although the narrative of The Three Little Pigs is neatly developed into three-phased distinctions, the children have difficulty remembering if the first house is wood, straw, or brick. Had they acted out the story parts and used their own language, as Pellegrini and



Galda suggest, their story reconstruction and comprehension might have been better.

Since Paddy Finds a Job is a wordless picture book, the children naturally used their own language in acting out the story. With the exception of three students, all the children retold the events in order. To reinforce the concept of first, second, and third, I worked with these three children, (Michael, Tykesha, and Leo) who had not grasped the concepts. At the end of the period, Michael recalled the events in order. Leo still had not made the distinction among first, second, and third in relation to the story; but Tykesha retold the story sequentially. Pellegrini and Galda (1982) reported that lower-ability children have significantly better recall of story events through specific role play.

Thursday, October 4, 1989: Demonstration #3

According to Heath (1983), Trackton students "enjoy and respond enthusiastically to stories read aloud to them, especially stories with animal or fanciful characters" (p. 296). Children pick up these books over and over, and when they have heard the story many times, they are able to say from memory portions

of the pages (Clay, 1986; Holdaway, 1979; Ochs, 1979). "They pick up chunks of the language from the stories--the formulaic openings, the direct quotations, and long-running passages of word play, such as those in Dr. Seuss books" (Heath, 1983, 298).

Therefore, for the third teacher demonstration, I selected the rhyming pattern book, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin. Rasala (1989), using this particular storybook in a lower-class kindergarten setting, found that some children who were reluctant to retell stories in the classroom were reported to have chanted from this book at home. I chose this storybook, too, because it is a fanciful book labeling animals and colors.

The demonstration, again, is held in Mrs. Alexander's classroom. She, too, asks the children to sit Indian style in the large semi-circle arrangement. As soon as children are seated, I remind them of my name. "Yes," I say, "Weems," as I write it on the board, "begins with the same letter as the name of today." "Wednesday!" a child calls out.

"Yes," I say as I write Wednesday on the board, "let's say it in a sentence. Today is Wednesday. Say

it with me." I then carefully go around the circle and ask each child to say his or her name in a sentence. I model the procedure first (e.g., "My name is Ashley.") In addition to inviting children to interact, this simple activity allows me to call each child by his or her name during the demonstration.

I begin with the classic pattern book Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?. First, I read the title and the author's and illustrator's names. Opening the book and showing the first picture, I say, "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? I see a ... ." (I hesitate before turning the page to a picture of a red bird.) Children say "red bird," and I say "looking at me." I repeat, "Red bird, red bird, what do you see? I see a ... ." (Again, I hesitate.) I turn the page, and children say, "I see a yellow duck looking at me." Children chant the refrain throughout the story. Then they "read" the book with me. Almost all call out; some whisper, but all are participating.

With the book closed, they "read." Then I write "red bird," "yellow duck," etc. on a story chart. Encouraging the children to read with me, I move my hand from left to right. They read and watch as I

write. I pay special attention to words that begin with c, p, and w sounds, since these letters have been introduced previously in class. As we "read" the book (still closed) a third and final time, I run my hand beneath the words printed on the chart and call the children's attention to the print. "Oh, that's so good!" I praise them. "You are readers, and you're about to become authors!" The children move from their circle to tables which have been set up as writing centers. Here, we make a class book of Brown Bear and write our names on the cover.

#### Commentary

Mrs. Johns has been in her classroom for three weeks now. (She had a substitute teacher the first week of school.) During this three-week period, no storybook reading has been observed. After three demonstrations (a pilot demonstration and two teacher demonstrations) consisting of appropriate instructional strategies and extension activities, hopefully, some of Mrs. Johns' teaching techniques will center around books. The instructional strategies have included interacting with the children about the meaning of print as opposed to drilling on isolated skills,

involving the children in the story by relating the text to their lives, negotiating the author's message and the children's understanding of it, and the use of praise and positive feedback. So far, the extension activities have included book-making, creative drawing as opposed to structured art sheets, and play-acting.

Wednesday, October 11, 1989: Post-three Demonstration

8:45 a.m. Tykesha runs to grab me. Nothing is said, but words aren't necessary. "Oh, you're wearing your black today, and today is our black day," greets Mrs. Johns who is also dressed in black. "We missed you yesterday; it was our orange day," she says to me candidly like we were old friends interested in the same things. At her request, the children enter the classroom quietly and sit in their circle.

9:00 a.m. "Who can tell me what letter today begins with?" asks Mrs. Johns.

Biffie, forgetting to raise her hand, says, "Wednesday."

"Yes," says Mrs. Johns overlooking the behavior, "let's write Wednesday on the board. It begins with the same letter as 'wolf.' Yesterday, was Tuesday, October tenth so today is October... ."

"Eleven!" says Biffie.

"Yes, let's say today's date in a complete sentence," suggests Mrs. Johns.

Most of the class chimes in, "Today is Wednesday, October 11, 1989."

"We're not going to count and say our usual things today because we want to have to enough time to make our black book. Yesterday was our orange day. Let's review our story," says Mrs. Johns. She holds up a story chart where she has printed sentences and pasted orange pictures of whatever is printed in the sentence. "What does this sentence say is orange?" asks Mrs. Johns. Katie reads, "A pumpkin is orange." Biffie reads, "A carrot is orange." "Come on everyone," urges Mrs. Johns. Almost all the children say, "A box is orange," and finish reading the story chart. Tykesha, Michael, and Stovall are actually saying the sentences. Tykesha is not even mouthing the words as she frequently does. "Oh, that is so good!" praises Mrs. Johns, "You are readers! Let's do our purple story, too."

The children do not read these sentences right away, perhaps, because this story was introduced a few

days ago. Mrs. Johns prompts, "A p-p-pail is purple. Let's all make the 'p' sound." Everyone is puffing except Tykesha, who finally does. "Raise your hand if you can think of a word that begins with the letter 'p.'" asks Mrs. Johns. Tiffany says "pig," Biffie says "puppet," Katie says "preacher," Jesse says "pumpkin," Michael says "pig," and Jason says "donkey."

"No!" corrects Biffie. "That's a 'd,' not a 'p.'" Stovall says "skeleton." Biffie is quick to say, "That begins with 'k.'"

"Here's Leo!" exclaims their teacher, "We missed you yesterday. Where were you?" Leo looks lost like an orphan.

"Nuttin'," he murmurs.

In the silence, Biffie exclaims, "Today's my birthday!"

"Oh, not really, Biffie?" asks Mrs. Johns looking up in surprise.

"Yes, it is," says Biffie. "My mamma forgot to-- (head lowering and voice growing faint) to give me a party, that's all."

"How old are you?" asks Mrs. Johns.

"Five," she whispers.

"I thought you were only four," says Mrs. Johns, halfway to herself as if she were thinking about something. Warm-heartedly, she suggests, "Let's sing Happy Birthday to Biffie!" As the children sing, Biffie's head continues to hang. It's just like the time she was scolded for "talking" instead of "thinking."

"Miz Johns," interrupts Leo, "can I bring some glue home?"

"Darlin', why are you askin' me that now?" sighs Mrs. Johns.

"I want to ... ." Before he can finish, Shalindra has begun to slide in and out of the circle.

"No, we don't act like that, Shalindra," scolds Mrs. Johns. "No, you don't pass either. You don't go to first grade!"

#### Commentary

A pattern emerging in the data is that Mrs. Johns is now imitating many of the instructional techniques from the bookreading demonstrations; however, still no storybook reading is observed. She is dictating stories, but not using books. She is modeling language techniques, such as emphasizing the use of sentences



and calling the children's attention to print without drilling on the initial sounds of words.

Although Mrs. Johns is a model of some expected behaviors (e.g., "Oh, that is so good! You are readers."), another pattern also emerging in the data is the inappropriate behavior of negative talk. "No, we don't act like that, Shalindra," as she slides in and out of the circle, "No, you don't pass either. You don't go to first grade."

When Mrs. Johns praises Katie for knowing her numbers (e.g., "Is Katie the only one who knows her numbers? We say them everyday."), her comment is potentially damaging for the other children. The comment, a social comparison, may imply to the others, "You don't know your sixties, is there something wrong with you?" Another social comparison, "Katie, you must come to school; you're a real leader," may suggest to the other children that their teacher does not value them as much as she does Katie. In a study on differential socialization in the classroom, Wilcox (1982) uncovers the subconscious theme of teachers' preconceived expectations of children, which are based on identifications that are generalized. Although

outwardly successful, Mrs. Johns unconsciously may base some of her behavior, such as praise, on preconceived conclusions. According to Wilcox, the misuse of praise may possibly develop improper mind-sets in some of the children which could result in their inability to deal in real-world situations at some point in the future.

Thursday, October 19, 1989: Following Demonstration #4

9:00 a.m. "Today, I'm going to read a storybook that has a lot of 's' sounds in it," begins Mrs. Johns. "I'm gonna tell you this one thing, Shalindra, you're not going to crawl in and out of this circle like a snake!" reprimands Mrs. Johns shaking her finger at her. Resuming her regal composure, Mrs. Johns continues, "Sky Shadow is the name of this book." (She does not mention the author.) "I want you to listen to the story as I read it and see if you can name a word that begins with 's.' I'm not gonna fall out with you if you can't," she reassures. "Biffie, move over there so the other children can see," instructs Mrs. Johns, as Biffie scoots closer and closer to her teacher and to the book.

As Mrs. Johns begins the story, other children get on their knees to try to see the book. In their

excitement, many children get in front of their peers. I can only assume that it is because of this distraction that Mrs. Johns stops showing the pictures in the book. However, she manages to sustain the children's interest by asking relevant questions. She expands their knowledge by explaining why on some days they can see their shadows and on others, they cannot. "When do you see your shadow, Michael?" asks Mrs. Johns. Michael hesitates.

Patrick says, "Everyday when I go outside I see my shadow."

"The story said," interjects Mrs. Johns, "that you couldn't see your shadow if the sun wasn't shining."

The children fail to grasp this concept. Jason just looks at Mrs. Johns. Michael and Darilyn look around the room, and Stovall pokes at something in the carpet. Even Biffie says nothing. Mrs. Johns attempts to explain, "The sun, just like any light, makes a shadow. When you stand in front of it, you block the light, and that's your shadow. So, when the sun isn't out, there is no shadow. Look in your room at night, when it's dark," she suggests, "to see if you can see your shadow."

After reading the story, Mrs. Johns asks, "Have you picked out your 's' sounds yet?" "Yes," says Darilyn. "The little girl's name in the story is Shirley. My aunt's name is Shirley." "What did the little boy see in the shining sun?" asks Mrs. Johns. Patrick's hand goes up. "Shadow!" he cries. "Shadow, my word!" pouts Biffie. "Tykesha, did you hear one?" inquires her teacher. Tykesha doesn't answer. "Shoes," whispers Biffie trying to help her. "Biffie, sometime your brain is like popcorn. It pops out answers too fast!" scolds Mrs. Johns.

"I'm going to give you a big assignment this morning," announces their teacher. "Choose any book on the shelf and sit down with one good one and write down words that begin with 's,' not 's' in the middle or at the end, but a word that begins with 's.' Biffie, Justin, Stovall, and Jesse, I want y'all to go to the book center first. Darilyn, Tykesha, and Michael, I have a worksheet of alphabet soup for you to color. Use a light color on the soup, so you can make your alphabets darker."

At this time, Tiffany and Katie walk in from the Language Development class. Mrs. Johns asks if I will

read with them, but before beginning the story, I check on the group looking for 's' words. Jason has found the word "school," and Jesse has found the word "sheep." Stovall has found "see." Then, Katie comes to me with a book. She sits at the table and whispers with serious eyes, "Miss Nancy, I can't read." With that, I run to get the class-made rendition of Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? and say, "I bet you can read this book!" With no more encouragement, she did.

#### Commentary

I am excited that Mrs. Johns, at last, has begun to use books, even though she has not established bookreading as a routine. A regularly recurring pattern for Mrs. Johns is the continued use of scaffolding, that is, furnishing the child with assistance until understanding is reached. At first, Mrs. Johns used scaffolding in discussions of safety and community helpers, but now around books.

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding is language based. A child needs an adult present who intends to communicate. In Sky Shadow, Mrs. Johns uses language to clarify the scientific concept of shadows. Again,

in the story, Copy Cat, she uses language to facilitate the understanding of the text.

Other perspectives toward emerging literacy build on Vygotsky's (1978) theory. According to Roser and Martinez (1985), the storyreader serves as co-responder and informer/monitor. As co-responder, Mrs. Johns attempts to broaden the children's related knowledge about shadows. In this attempt, she is also providing scaffolding. She explains that one cannot see his or her shadow when the sun isn't shining. "There has to be light in order to make a shadow," she says. She invites the children to "look in their rooms at night, when it's dark, to see if they can see their shadows." As informer/monitor, Mrs. Johns checks for understanding by asking questions about the story.

Cochran-Smith (1985) also builds upon the language theory of Vygotsky. In observing "rug time," the name given for gathering on the rug to hear a story in a middle-class preschool program, she reveals that authors write for intended audiences and cannot possibly include everything the young reader may need in order to construct meaning from the text. Therefore, the storyreader mediates the intended

meaning for the child. Through teacher-child interactions around books, then, the teacher is assisting with the meaning of the text.

After Mrs. Johns finishes reading Copy Cat, a story about a "cool cat," Darilyn is unsure about what a "cool cat" means. As Mrs. Johns builds the necessary scaffolding for her, the relationship between teacher and child is an interpsychological relationship. As Mrs. Johns explains that "jello is cool because it puts a cool taste on our tongues, but that Calvin Cool is a cool cat because 'he's a man about town,'" Darilyn is clearer about the meanings of the word. Thus, the relationship concerning that particular word is no longer interpsychological but intrapsychological. That is, Darilyn has internalized the meaning that Calvin Cool may be a fancy cat, but not a chilly one.

Although Mrs. Johns is providing scaffolding for the children around books and is now reading some books, her overuse of worksheets, ditto art sheets, and workbooks, all potentially stressful for young children, continues. After the reading of Sky Shadow, Mrs. Johns asks Katie, Jesse, Patrick, and Jason to sit with her. At Mrs. Johns' table, she says, "Put your

finger on the capital 's,' and trace it for me. Take your time," she cautions, "so that you do it right." After the children have practiced this skill, Mrs. Johns asks them to color the pictures in the lower half of the worksheet that begin with 's.' "Look at these pictures," she says. "Which one does not begin with 's?'"

Katie says "pig."

"What did I say to color, Jesse?" asks Mrs. Johns. Jesse is coloring the sandwich and the pig. "No, 'pig' doesn't begin with 's,'" corrects Mrs. Johns. "Let's look at the next row. The first picture is a ... ."

"Jet," says Katie.

"Yes!" praises her teacher. "What two pictures begin with 's?'"

"Socks and saw," says Jason.

"Doesn't anyone else besides Katie and Jason know the 's' sound?" she asks.

Heath (1983) has noted that workbook illustrations are usually two-dimensional line drawings, which are highly stylized, and familiar only to those students who have had extensive experience in labeling these



items in books. "A particular series of squiggles always cued the reader that the animal was a sheep; curled tail cued the reader for the label 'pig;' long ears and round tail were the signs of a rabbit, short ears and a long tail, a cat" (p. 290). Since these children may not have had extensive experience labeling book items, confusion over workbook pictures could occur. For example, Jesse may have thought that the sketch of the pig was a sheep.

Furthermore, workbook/worksheet illustrators and writers frequently are looking for answers that are not meaningful to lower socio-economic children (Heath, 1983). For example, it is unlikely that the children in Mrs. Johns' class have been inside an airplane. Therefore, the word "jet" is probably out of their realm of experience.

Coloring pictures in workbooks, then, that begin with specific letters is what Kamii (1985) is referring to when she says children who already know concepts complete workbooks easily, and children who do not know these concepts will not understand them by completing workbooks.

Friday, October 27, 1989: Following Demonstration #5

For the fifth teacher demonstration, I decided that all the children should have their own book of Brown Bear. Therefore, for each child in Mrs. Alexander's classroom, I made a condensed copy of the favorite storybook. I couldn't wait for Mrs. Johns' children to have their little books of Brown Bear. Mrs. Johns wanted to know when I could do the activity with her class, and I said, "How about tomorrow?" With the genuine smile that was exchanged between us so often, she said, "Oh, they'd love it!"

9:15 a.m. All I have to do is sit in the semi-circle with Brown Bear, Brown Bear on my lap, and the children take over. They love this classic pattern book and know it by heart. As I had done before, I write the names of the animals on the story chart. This time, however, I turn the poster over and write only five of the animals' names that I think they can easily learn: red bird, yellow duck, blue horse, purple cat, and white dog. I ask each child to choose one of the animals that he or she can "read." After they have made their selections, I give them a bookmark with their animal name printed on it. As we

read the story again, I let the children with "red bird", "yellow duck," and so on match their markers to the same words on the story chart. I then give each child his own copy of Brown Bear, a little book containing only five pages with one line of print on each page. They are as excited as if the books were gifts from under Santa's tree.

Monday, October 30, 1989

When I entered the school the following Monday morning, I saw several kindergartners leaving the cafeteria. What I heard was more important, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see? I see a red bird looking at me." Upon entering the breezeway, I heard children on the playground singing, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see? I see a teacher looking at me!"

"Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see? I see children looking at me," I echoed to the children who were jumping up and down at Mrs. Johns' door. In the classroom, not every child remembered to bring his book back from the weekend, but every child, including Leo, could read the little book.

I felt sure that some of the children had memorized portions of the story, but I was curious to

see which children had actually made the connection from recognizing "red" in Brown Bear to recognizing "red" in another context, that is, who had made the transfer from contextualized print--recognizing the word in a familiar setting--to decontextualized print--reading the word in a new setting. For my final teacher demonstration, therefore, I decided to construct a demonstration, with the help of the teachers, around this concept of decontextualization. After all, this is the link I had been looking for. Although the basal had just introduced its fifth letter, I had spent two months watching these children grow and intuitively knew that some of them were ready to read.

#### Commentary

A literacy pattern apparent in this section of data is the children's memorization of text language. Researchers (Clay, 1986; Heath, 1983; Holdaway, 1979; Ochs, 1979; Sulzby, 1986; and Tannen, 1985) report that when a child hears a story over several readings, he or she memorizes portions or chunks of the text. The child is, then, able to attend to the language without reference to the immediate situation. This is exactly

what happens with Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?.

In analyzing my field notes, I could simply jot down the pattern of learning language without having to be in the immediate situation of hearing the story read. However, having reflected on that Monday morning when I entered the school and heard the children's chanting "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see?" in the cafeteria and on the playground, the chanting is perhaps more than mere memorization of text language. It is possibly a cry for literacy--or the lack thereof.

In a biologically based theory of language acquisition, Lenneberg (1967) stated that language development involves syntactic rules, transformational rules, propositions, and semantic categories. No differences in the age or speed of acquisition of these features could be found in cultures studied thus far. "That is, unless deaf...or otherwise seriously handicapped, the average five-year-old has mastered most of the sound system, the syntax, and many of the semantic categories of his language" (p. 287).

This theory suggests that children cannot be linguistically deprived. Certain children lack a

familiarity with rhymes, stories, colors, shapes, numbers, and vocabularies that are the core of formal education, but they do acquire language. Naturally, differences exist in the syntax and sentence structure of the language for different groups, but the basic process of acquisition is the same (Lenneberg, 1967). "The process by which one child derives 'he do' and 'he don't' is the same process that another child uses to derive a chain ending for 'doesn't he.' It is only the social context that renders 'don't he' less acceptable than 'doesn't he'" (p. 287).

According to Lenneberg's (1967) theory, the children in Mrs. Johns' classroom do not suffer from linguistic deprivation. They are possibly the victims of literacy deprivation. Far more important than hearing one of my stories, was the little book, smudged and wrinkled at the edges, that they could call their own. "Miss Nancy, I read Brown Bear to my mamma last night, and she was real proud of me. I read it all by myself! I didn't need any help," boasts Biffie.

Thursday, October 26, 1989: An Afternoon Observation

Dr. Charlesworth, early childhood specialist, and I observe Mrs. Johns' class in the afternoon when math

instruction is taking place. After instructing the children in a whole group activity, Mrs. Johns divides them into two groups. As she begins to call the names of Katie and Biffie, Jesse finishes calling the group for her. "Justin, Patrick, and Tiffany," he mimics. Then he names the children in the other group: Leo, Tykesha, Michael, and Darilyn. Jesse, a repeater and familiar with the ways of school, is at least one student aware of the homogeneous grouping pattern that exists in this classroom.

#### Commentary

A developmentally inappropriate behavior is the grouping of children by abilities. Bredekamp (1987) has warned that a major cause of negative self-image for children from kindergarten through third grade is failure to learn to read on schedule or being assigned to the lowest ability math group. As was previously discussed, Mrs. Johns frequently asks a high-ability child to assist a lower-ability child, but the pattern of grouping children with like abilities to work together remains a fairly rigid procedure in the classroom.

Thursday, November 9, 1989: Demonstration #6

The teachers and I had planned the last teacher demonstration around the Thanksgiving holidays. At their suggestion, I incorporated the use of learning centers and administered the procedure to Mrs. Alexander's children on Thursday, November ninth. I wanted to know if they could make the transfer from recognizing a word such as "purple" in its familiar context, "purple cat," to recognizing it in a new context such as "purple grape." (Purple cat is one of the fanciful characters in Brown Bear.) So, I made a menu of the restaurant they love most, designed it around the reading series' theme of Thanksgiving foods, and called it "Thanksgiving at McDonald's."

9:00 a.m. First, I read Frog Goes to Dinner by Mercer Mayer. The children delight in this fantasy tale about a frog who, after doing all the wrong things in a restaurant, learns the importance of good manners. I then give each child a menu that lists various foods such as yellow corn, red jello, and white cake. We play "restaurant" and order foods from the menu. I let the children choose a center in which they would like to work. The centers have been set up much like a real



restaurant: a dining center where children order from the menu; the housekeeping center where the food is prepared; the water center, actually a large tub of styrofoam, where the dishes are washed; and the book center where small groups of children take turns reading their menus. At the book center, I have a mini-tape recorder with the microphone so that I can distinguish those children who have made the transfer from contextualized print to decontextualized print. On Monday, I repeat this procedure in Mrs. Johns' class, except that each child reads individually to me in the library.

#### Commentary

In a similar print-awareness procedure, Yetta Goodman (1986) implements three stages:

The actual label is shown to the child first (for example, the entire front panel from a Rice Krispies box.) At a second session with the subject, the same labels are presented, retaining their stylized print and color, but with all other surrounding print and designs removed. In a final session, the child is presented with the graphic unit of the label

printed by hand in black ink on a white index card. (p. 3)

The steps to the print-awareness procedure developed for Mrs. Johns' children are the following: Pages from Bill Martin's Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? are shown to the child first (for example, the picture with its printed label: "purple cat.") At a second session, the child is presented with the graphic unit of the label only, printed by hand in black ink on white paper in the format of a booklet. In a final session, the child is given one of the words, such as "purple," paired with "grape" instead of the associated "cat," to determine if the child can recognize the word in another context, that is, to see if he or she has made the transfer from contextualized print to decontextualized print.

#### Commentary on Each Child in Relation to

##### Print Procedure

As expected, a pattern made explicit during the administration of this procedure and one that weaves throughout the data is that Biffie, Katie, Tiffany, Darilyn, and Patrick are readers. They read every word perfectly in Brown Bear and on the McDonald's menu. In

other words, they have made the progression from recognizing "purple" coupled with the picture in Bill Martin's book, to recognizing the word in their own books without pictures, to reading "purple" in a completely different context--"purple grape" on a menu. The pattern is that these children have completed all three stages of decontextualization.

Reading his Brown Bear book, Jason calls the yellow duck a white dog and the blue horse a purple cat. However, when he turns to the page of "purple cat," he says "purple cat," and when he turns to "white dog," he says "w-w-white dog." On the menu, he reads "purple grape," "white cake," and "Pepsi." He doesn't read "red" but spells out the letters "r-e-d." Although Jason cannot recall many words without support of contextual cues, at least one of these cues is recognizing the sounds of letters.

When Stovall finishes reading his Brown Bear book, which he reads perfectly, I say, "That's wonderful! How did you do that?"

"My mamma told me how," he says, puffing up with pride.

When I give him his McDonald's menu, he asks if there's dressing on it. He reads "red jello," "white cake," and "blue berry." For the word "purple," he says "p" and then goes "puff puff purple!" Thus, Stovall has made great progress in acquiring literacy skills. Two months ago, he had difficulty matching lower and upper case letters; now he is associating letters with words.

Jesse, one of Mrs. Johns' two repeaters, reads Brown Bear with enthusiasm and without difficulty. Upon opening the menu, he says "chocolate shake, cheese burger, and a Big Mac!" I inform him that I would like for him to order foods that are printed on the menu. He says, "Oh, purple grapes and green beans. What is the word above it?" [meaning the green beans] he asks.

"Yellow corn," I say.

"Oh," he says, "I would like yellow corn and...red jello and a coke!"

I direct his attention to "white cake" and "Pepsi," but he does not recognize these words. Therefore, a pattern in Jesse's developing literacy behaviors is the recognition of several words out of context using the sounds of letters as cues.

Like Stovall, Jesse uses language in a creative way. In rereading a story about the first Thanksgiving, Mrs. Johns hands each child a cut-out character from the story. When asked who is the King of England, Jesse volunteers "King Kong." When Mrs. Johns corrects him, he lets his character fall to the floor and says, "Here go King Kong!"

Heath (1983) has suggested "that because of the lack of literate behaviors on the part of parents, the Trackton child has to depend on a strong sense of visual imagery..." (p. 192). For example, when the Trackton child is sent to the store to buy a loaf of bread, on subsequent trips, he or she remembers the location of the bread section and the placement of that particular loaf. In other words, the child seems to remember the scene so that upon recalling print, he or she visualizes the physical context in which it occurred. Thus, this strong dependence on visual imagery, according to Heath, often prevents the efficient transfer of skills learned in one context to another. That is, the Trackton child could read the brand names as they appeared on the products but could not recall the names when printed out on a typewriter.

Perhaps, what Heath means is that children from backgrounds lacking in literacy skills rely on print in the environment (e.g., the commercial name of the loaf of bread) longer than children whose parents call their attention to decontextualized print (e.g., writing the brand name on paper). Ong (1982) described the Black culture as a culture remaining oral for so long that imagery was used to facilitate recall. Thus, a language pattern that I am observing in Jesse and Stovall is that they cannot recall a lot of words at this point without contextual support. Perhaps, they are depending on their visual imagery.

At first, Leo says nothing. I ask, "Do you remember the name of this book?"

"Brown Bear," he murmurs.

"Do you want to read it with me?" I ask gently. Leo shakes his head affirmatively. Together we read the first page, but the next page, which says "yellow duck," Leo reads without assistance. He also reads the word "blue" and makes the "p" sound for purple. He calls the menu Sweep-a-Burger but runs his fingers under "McDonald's" as I say it. He recognizes "coke" and "purple."

I know how to make 'L' too," he says. Leo is showing me what he knows instead of what I ask. Other school things Leo knows are a rectangle and the color yellow. Thus, Leo has acquired some literacy skills, but at this point, his development is not as accelerated as some of the students. However, Piaget's unique contribution is that children learn at individual rates (Charlesworth, 1985). "Observing the child is a guide to the maturity level and tells you what time it is" (p. 26). Rather than Leo's learning to tell me about the words on a menu, I have to learn to read him. That is, I need to know where he is developmentally and provide him with appropriate guidance. For the young child, the burden should be mine, not the child's.

Tykesha reads the title of her book and the first page. I help her with "yellow duck." She calls "blue horse" a purple cat, but when I direct her gaze to the letter "b," she says "b." Then she says "blue horse." I think we are off to a good start, when she calls "purple cat" a red hen. I direct her gaze to the letter "p," and she exclaims "P!" I read "purple cat" and "white dog" to her, since I do not want this event

to become stressful. However, she points to the letter "w" and makes a whistling sound and finally says "w!"

The obvious pattern in Tykesha's literacy development is the acquisition of letter-sound recognition. Although she cannot yet read without support of context, Tykesha is using the sounds of letters as her cues. In the whole language approach, using phonics (the sounds of letters and combinations of letters to teach reading) is not encouraged unless the child fails to grasp words by sight or by working with print in other forms. I suggest to Mrs. Johns that Tykesha might be a candidate for phonics instruction. Teaching young children phonics is presenting the child with an association he or she must memorize without much meaning (Elkind, 1986). However, success with sounds instills the confidence Tykesha may need at this point.

Although Shalindra, a repeater, reads Brown Bear perfectly, she recognizes few words on the McDonald's menu. Her lack of newly-acquired literacy skills is not surprising. Rather than devote her attention to school tasks, she requires attention from others. Shalindra gets this desired attention by "fussing" or



arguing with peers. Heath (1983) says that just as Trackton boys have to learn to be good storytellers to achieve status in the community, young girls have to learn to fuss, "able to protect their rights in the neighborhood" (p. 98). According to Heath, young girls are allowed, even encouraged, to fuss, thus giving them a chance to learn the kinds of counterassertions which are most effective, just as young boys are encouraged to be aggressive. Lying down in the semi-circle and "fussing" with the other children are the activities Shalindra prefers. The passive behavior of lying down and the aggressive behavior of arguing with others are behaviors that are symptomatic of stress (Burts et al., 1990a).

Michael reads "purple grape" and "Pepsi." I direct his gaze to "red jello," but he says nothing. I tell him that this word begins with the same letter as his last name (Jackson), and it says jello. He then says "red jello." Gradually, Michael is learning to segment decontextualized written language. That is, he is separating the print from the picture. For example, in Ferreiro's (1986) work, the child, Mariana, may not be able to read the word "bear," as in "the polar

bear," but knows that the word is in the first line of print next to the picture. Similarly, Michael does not read the word red, which is paired with "red jello," until I say "jello." Although he no longer needs a pictorial representation, he still requires the paired association, which acts as a stimulus like the picture.

Like Mariana, the distance between oral language and its graphic form is too great for assimilation to occur, but with guidance, Michael, like all the children, will make the connection on his own. In other words, the Piagetian concepts of assimilation and accommodation will naturally occur in accordance with the child's own biological rate.

Wednesday, November 8, 1989: Post-teacher Demonstration

I cannot end the narrative without reporting the following observation:

9:10 a.m. Dr. Richardson, my professor of research, and I are observing Mrs. Johns' reading the story Mr. Bear to the children. There's a knock at the door. The school's principal also has come to observe. Just as she is seated, the intercom system interrupts with a series of lengthy announcements. By now, Leo is playing with his shoelaces, Darilyn is rocking back and

forth on her knees, and Patrick is yawning. I relate to the anxiety Mrs. Johns must be feeling.

9:15 a.m. Calm and steady, however, Mrs. Johns resumes the reading of the story. She broadens the children's story knowledge by relating items in the text to their lives and lets the children share their experiences. "What did the sheep give?" asks Mrs. Johns.

"Wool," says Biffie.

"Yes," replies Mrs. Johns, "did you know the sweaters you wear are wool?"

"And the blankets, too," says Darilyn.

"My mamma took me to the shoppin' mall to buy some new sweaters," offers Jesse.

Mrs. Johns concludes with a dramatization of the story's events. Applauding the children with a butterfly clap, she asks, "How did you feel about your part in the play?"

"Good," says Katie.

"Happy," says Jesse.

"What did you like about the play, Tykesha?" asks Mrs. Johns.

"The bear, because I saw one at the zoo," interjects Stovall.

"I liked the cow," says Michael.

"I liked myself!" says Jason. Everyone laughs.

"Y'all did the story real good," compliments Mrs. Johns. "There were a lot of animals in it, but we'll have to work on what came first, second, and third."

#### Commentary

I assume that during the dramatization of the story, Mrs. Johns thought the children did not sequence the events as precisely as she would have desired, especially with onlookers present. However, I was pleased with the bookreading session because Mrs. Johns recovered from her initial anxiety and utilized many of the bookreading strategies modeled in the teacher demonstrations. When Mrs. Johns began the bookreading, Leo, Darilyn, and Patrick, who had become distracted during the waiting period, exhibited no stress behaviors. In contrast, they, as well as the other children, responded with appropriate behaviors related specifically to bookreading, such as asking questions, entering into dialogue with their teacher and peers, listening to each other, reenacting the story, and

sharing their feelings and experiences (Cochran-Smith, 1985; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Yaden, Smolkin, & Conlon, 1989). One student, referring to his part in the play, exhibited a stress-free behavior (e.g., "I liked myself.")

The classroom setting had evolved from a potentially stressful situation where the children were waiting for the bookreading event to begin to a non-stressful situation when Mrs. Johns implemented the storybook reading and used appropriate teaching techniques.

#### Summary of Findings

I observed both appropriate and inappropriate teaching behaviors and their effects on the students with consequences of stress and reduced stress and a change in literacy acquisition behaviors.

#### Pre-demonstration Observations

Prior to the demonstrations, Mrs. Johns was observed interacting with the children to assist them with word meaning. Also, she was observed modeling some expected behaviors. However, her use of expected behaviors, such as praise, was inconsistent. She was observed using negative feedback such as social

comparisons and demeaning statements. She used structured materials such as worksheets and ditto art sheets. She asked questions read directly from the basal without relating the questions to the children's lives. No storybook reading was observed. Lessons were primarily whole group and teacher directed, and learning centers were seldom used. Additionally, children were grouped primarily by ability levels.

Some of the children displayed passive and aggressive behaviors that are symptomatic of stress. The passive behaviors included the facial behavior of gazing, the non-responsive behavior of withdrawal, and the physical behaviors of leaving the group, lying down, and yawning. Active stress behaviors observed included manipulation of clothing, the verbal dysfunction of talking at inappropriate times and fussing with peers, and the aggressive behavior of teacher-attention seeking.

Literacy behaviors observed were rote recitation of the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, and months of the year. The children also traced letters and numbers on their worksheets.

### Post-demonstration Observations

Although Mrs. Johns still evidenced some of her inappropriate behaviors, her use of appropriate behaviors increased. The classroom teacher used language around storybooks now to assist children with the understanding of the text. She imitated storyreading techniques from the teacher demonstrations. During storyreading, she broadened the children's knowledge, invited them to participate, related the story to the children's experiences, and asked questions that related to the children's lives. The children were observed to spontaneously segment print from pictures, recognize letters and letter-sounds, ask and answer questions, reenact stories to enhance recall, memorize text language, recognize words in and out of context, and teach literacy skills to peers. During storyreading, few stress behaviors were observed.

As was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, time is a significant factor in the study regarding the developmental cycle of behavior. To develop literacy skills and instructional behaviors requires time, and maturational time certainly accounts for some of the

behavior change. In other words, it must be emphasized that the children's growth in literacy cannot be attributed to the interventions alone. Children construct knowledge at individual rates (Piaget, 1974), and many of these children were biologically ready when they entered kindergarten to advance in their literacy development. However, I exposed them to literacy skills in ways more appropriate for young children, especially for Black children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and hopefully eased their transition from home environment to school environment.

Likewise, the storyreading intervention cannot be the sole cause of Mrs. Johns' use of appropriate instructional practices. In ethnography, the alternative to causality is choice (Firestone, 1987). The intervention presented an opportunity for shaping action but did not determine it. Other factors (e.g., faculty meetings, workshops, conferences) could have worked together for the change in teacher behavior. For example, during a planning session for a teacher demonstration, Mrs. Washington remarked that she had seen "that" done at a whole language workshop. However, for the duration of this study, these teachers



did not attend workshops or conferences. The teachers and I both attended the monthly faculty meetings where the principal was trying to enlist teacher support of a whole language teaching model, but political factions-- conflicts between groups of teachers in the school-- became the issue rather than teaching methods.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### Summary of the Study

The Carver Elementary School study is an ethnographic record made over a period of 12 weeks. The study involved observations of kindergarten students' literacy skills and stress-related behaviors and a teacher's instructional behavior before, during, and after a literacy intervention. The intervention involved modeling for teachers appropriate instructional practices for teaching kindergarten children literacy skills in developmentally appropriate ways. Specifically, I selected the storybook as the foundation for my instruction, because storyreading is an interactive, rather than directive, event for calling the child's attention to print.

The subjects of my study were 12 lower socio-economic Black children and their teacher. From the three kindergarten teachers, the teacher was selected as one who could potentially benefit from a change to the use of more developmentally appropriate literacy practices.

The demonstrations were planned with the involvement of all the kindergarten teachers. Demonstrations were done with students in another kindergarten classroom with the target teacher as an observer. I could then observe any changes in the target teacher's and her students' behaviors in their classroom following the demonstrations.

Based on the findings of Chadwick (1983), Donlan (1987), and Robinson and Swick (1983), I served as the outside resource person for the teachers and strived for a balance between leading the project myself and involving the teachers in a joint effort. I conducted planning sessions before each teacher demonstration to discuss teacher needs, their participatory roles in the demonstration, and how current research supports the strategies to be demonstrated. In sessions following the demonstrations, I received feedback from the teachers on the children's performance in accordance with the research.

In addition, I was careful to work with the top administrator in the school, Mrs. Brown, the principal. Chadwick (1983) has observed that effective inservice programs begin with the principal who looks at the

needs of those for whom he or she is responsible. To insure Mrs. Brown's support, I encouraged direct communication with her. I exchanged a few words with her almost every day to brief her on the progress of the study and to enlist her support of the teachers. I also let her know how grateful I was for the use of her school and commented on the cooperation of the teachers. Either I or the kindergarten teachers invited Mrs. Brown to the demonstrations. Although she was unable to attend all the demonstrations, from our frequent conversations with her, the teachers and I knew we had her support.

An initial observation period revealed that the children were responding predictably to formal schooling in a developmentally inappropriate setting. They were displaying passive and aggressive behaviors that were symptomatic of stress: gazing around the room, yawning, lying down when seated on the floor for whole group instruction, withdrawing, manipulating clothing, leaving the group, talking inappropriately, fussing with others, and inappropriately seeking the teacher's attention.

After this initial observation period, I instituted the bookreading demonstrations. I used print in many forms and pursued activities that children usually find exciting, such as making books and reenacting stories. Students' differing degrees of readiness did not affect the instruction, since the activities were open-ended and enabled the children to grow and learn at their individual rates.

Stories were not simply read to the children, nor did children act as a passive audience. Rather, storyreadings were based on an exchange between the children's understanding of the story and the author's message. This exchange contrasted with the other oral reading activities in the classroom, such as reading verbatim from the basal and reciting letters and numbers in rote fashion. Mrs. Johns began imitating my behavior after several sessions and received the same positive response from the children. Therefore, I knew that the cooperative exchange was not because I was the storyreader but because of the appropriateness of the technique.

During storybook reading few stress behaviors were observed. Children did not yawn, withdraw, or lie down

when seated on the floor. They did not pull at their clothes, move away from the circle, or gaze aimlessly around the room. They were quiet and wide-eyed and kept moving closer to the book. In their excitement, some children tried to get in front of others to see the story's pictures. However, this active form of behavior stemmed from enthusiasm, not stress.

#### Discussion

The ideas of both Piaget (1974) and Vygotsky (1978) provide insight into the value of active learning and the social interaction observed during storybook reading. Piaget has stated that the child assimilates and accomodates data which results in the cognitive process of adaptation. According to Piaget, as the child adapts, he or she constructs knowledge. In other words, the young child innately knows how to go about acting to obtain knowledge and thus constructs the appropriate schema when developmentally ready. Piaget's contention was that children learn through action. This idea was supported in the study as the children acted out events from storybooks to develop concepts such as sequencing.

Vygotsky (1978) placed a strong emphasis on the social component of cognitive development. He stressed the importance of the child's having language along with action in order to learn and having an adult present who could supply that language. Vygotsky referred to the adult assistance as "scaffolding." That is, the adult scaffolds or supports the child through language. Vygotsky also described a zone of proximal development as an opportune time for growth and one in which children are dependent on help from others. An adult or perhaps an older child must give them advice if they are to succeed within this zone and if eventually, by internalizing that advice, they are to perform independently.

Piaget's theories are not without a social component as well. He has suggested that the persons most qualified to help children solve a new problem and move to the next stage of development are those who have just done so themselves. In other words, someone who has just accomplished the task but has not progressed farther is the child's best guide. According to Piaget (1974), adults may even confuse children with their instruction. In this ethnography,

instances are recorded where peers help each other. For example, when Katie reads the letters from the title Most Care, she then helps Michael call out the letters. She tells him that the first letter is the same as the first letter in his name.

A host of researchers (Cochran-Smith, 1985; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Roser & Martinez, 1985; Snow & Goldfield, 1986; Snow, 1983) have elaborated on the social perspective of Vygotsky (1978) by describing the role of bookreading as a time to help the child become more independent. Supporting the view of Piaget, Ferreiro (1986) describes the time of learning to read as a developmentally ordered one. Since both theorists believed the adult or more advanced child to be essential in helping the young child become independent by assisting the child from one developmental stage to the next, it does not really matter which perspective teachers support. What is of greater importance is to recognize this common ground the two theorists share. For example, in reading a storybook about shadows, Mrs. Johns asks questions about shadows; the children's responses demonstrate a lack of understanding. The children are, then, in an area or zone of proximal



growth where assistance is needed. Mrs. Johns elaborates on the concept of shadows. Thus, the gap between the text and the children's understanding of it is negotiated by their teacher's verbalizations. Mrs. Johns is helping the children progress from one developmental stage to the next.

Often, the assistance is carried out by the children themselves who are at the next stage of development. Tiffany takes the book Whistle for Willie, and assuming the role of storyreader, teaches literacy skills to Biffie who repeats the procedure and teaches skills to Patrick. Thus, the important idea from both Piaget's (1974) and Vygotsky's (1978) work is that children use their developing abilities and the interactions around them to make sense of their world.

While Piaget's (1974) and Vygotsky's (1978) ideas support the active and language events observed, there was also the emotional aspect that was apparent relative to the initial presence of stress followed by a decrease of stress behavior during the storyreading. Strickland and Morrow (1989) have emphasized the security that storyreading provides for young children and have reminded us not to neglect the functions and

uses of bookreading episodes beyond the literacy ones. Part of what these researchers are saying is that the affective side of bookreading is important for bringing the child close to the reader of the story.

Heath (1983) has observed that for the child in the Black community of Trackton, storyreading at home did not occur. It follows, then, that for many of the children in the present study, bookreading may have been a new experience. Bookreading may have been used not only to introduce literacy skills but also to provide a more secure and less stressful learning environment.

Children from low socio-economic backgrounds are faced with multiple stressors both in the home and the community (McCracken, 1986). This situation does not enable them to more effectively deal with stress in school. On the contrary, Selye (1982) has reported that exposure to multiple stressors lowers the individual's resistance to disease. Honig (1986) has emphasized that too many stressors in a child's life may cause damage to self-esteem and retard educational growth. These children, therefore, need experiences

that are relaxing, enjoyable, curiosity-arousing, and confidence-building.

In order to eliminate unhealthy stress for children, teachers may effectively build relationships with them around books (Swick, 1987). Through bookreading, Mrs. Johns encourages interactions, extends children's ideas, and builds on children's strengths. Thus, supporting the children in Mrs. Johns' classroom through low-stress experiences such as bookreading is important in helping them adjust to their new environment.

Bookreading affects children's language development as well. Shortly, after the initial reading of Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, my part as the storyreader became less frequent. The children were taking the longer turns and providing memorized chunks of the text which enabled them to attend to language without reference to the immediate situation (Clay, 1986; Holdaway, 1979; Ochs, 1979). Although Snow and Goldfield (1986) have reported that text memorization is not a mechanism for language acquisition, the researchers state that text memorization describes processes that characterize

language acquisition. That is, children are learning that the language used in storyreading is also appropriate for situations outside the school bookreading event.

The children also were learning to connect language to its printed form. Ferreiro (1986) has applied Piaget's (1974) theory of assimilation and accomodation to the developmentally ordered concept of linking oral language to its graphic representation. Because children construct their own knowledge, their knowledge is incomplete and thus often differs from that of an adult. So, there will be differences in how a child makes the connection between oral language and print and how an adult makes that connection. It is important to remember that such differences are just as real, just as natural. That is, they come from the way children are, the way children are set up to learn at their own rates.

In Ferreiro's (1986) study, five-year-old Mariana constructed a schema for "the polar bears" that was different from the printed words in her workbook. These words simply said "bear" to her. More than likely she was happy for the moment with her own

solution; she even may have resisted an adult's suggesting she comply with the workbook version. Therefore, in order for the child to make the connection between oral language and print, Ferrerio is emphasizing, as Piaget (1974) does, the role of biology. The child builds processes that are developmentally ordered. However, Ferreiro, like Piaget, does not deny the importance of social interaction. For example, adult intervention may be positive when the assistance facilitates assimilation.

The major patterns that emerge from this study tie together the theories of Piaget (1974) and Vygotsky (1978) and the literature on storybook reading and stress. That is, if adult instruction is developmentally appropriate, stress will be reduced and learning facilitated. For example, Michael does not read the word red, which is paired with "red jello" until the word "jello" is spoken. Like Mariana, the connection between the oral language and its graphic form is too abstract for assimilation to occur without some kind of assistance, such as associating the word with the picture in the workbook. However, if the

intervention is inappropriate, the confidence Michael is gaining in making associations may suffer.

Another facet of this study was the attempt to show teachers instructional techniques to provide children with appropriate assistance and to examine what happened when these techniques were shown. In Heath's (1983) study, teachers also were shown methods to help lower-class Black children learn more effectively than they had in the past. However, Heath noted that the effects of her intervention were short-lived; only the most dedicated teachers continued the new methods beyond the first year.

Heath's goal was to meet the needs of the students by serving as teacher-aide or co-teacher in the classrooms and by working with the teachers to try new methods. The goal of the present study likewise was to meet the needs of the students by serving as co-teacher and trying new methods but first to meet the needs of the teachers. Heath did not address teacher needs. By my involving the teachers in the planning and follow-up sessions, they expressed their doubts and concerns.

Even if the teachers understood and agreed with the methodology, for the techniques to have real

meaning, they had to see that they could achieve the same results. In other words, they had to adapt the Piagetian- and Vygotskian-influenced methodologies to their individual teaching styles. Had Heath made the same kind of investment in the teacher, perhaps the effects of her intervention would have been longer-lasting.

Thus, through the modeling of Piagetian and Vygotskian compatible techniques, teachers could see that the techniques worked. Since the children responded positively to the interventions, teachers were willing to try the techniques. Mrs. Johns noticed a decrease in behavior problems and the connections the children were making with print.

### Conclusions

This ethnography examined three areas:

- 1) children's acquisition of literacy skills,
- 2) children's display of stress behaviors in relation to the appropriateness or inappropriateness of technique, and 3) a teacher's instructional behavior before and after teacher demonstrations. The effect of the instructional behavior on student behavior before and after the demonstrations also was examined.

In addressing these areas, it can be concluded that: 1) Children's acquisition of literacy skills is enhanced when taught in developmentally appropriate ways, and one such appropriate technique is storybook reading. 2) If developmentally appropriate techniques are used, children also may experience less stress. 3) When teachers are involved in the planning of inservice demonstrations using children on site, teachers are likely to imitate the techniques modeled in the demonstrations.

Since student behavior was observed before and after the interventions, I was able to see that once the teacher applied developmentally appropriate techniques, the children displayed an increase in literacy behaviors and a decrease in stress behaviors. During storyreading, children attended to the book and displayed few behaviors that were symptomatic of stress. The comparison was even more apparent when the teacher returned to her use of inappropriate techniques. For example, during whole- group instruction, there were few clues that the children were learning what they were supposed to be learning, and stress-related behaviors such as lying down and



leaving the group were observed. It could be concluded from these observations that developmentally appropriate techniques contribute to literacy development in ways that do not contribute to stress.

#### Implications of the Research

The present study yields another perspective from which to draw conclusions about the contribution of bookreading to young children's literacy development. By providing a descriptive account of classroom behavior in the context of literacy acquisition, this study offers an in-depth portrayal of how Black children from lower socio-economic backgrounds, where stressors exist both in and outside the home, acquire literacy skills.

An earlier bookreading project, the Sunshine project, involved showing parents of low socio-economic status how to read to their children, while the present study involved showing teachers how to read to their students. The Sunshine project was located in a rural area where parents were shown how to read to their children. The present study, an urban setting, involved teachers reading to their students. Developmentally appropriate strategies were used in

both settings. The outcomes of both studies indicated that children and parents of lower socio-economic status when shown through effective modeling techniques, when allowed to develop at their own pace, and when given symbols (print and numbers) to explore, are more likely to acquire literacy skills.

Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are faced with multiple stressors both in the home and the community (McCracken, 1986). To expose students to an instructional setting where additional stress may occur results in lowering the individual's resistance to disease (Selye, 1982) and may cause damage to the child's development of self-esteem and retard educational achievement (Honig, 1986). The findings of this study demonstrate that improving literacy instruction can both reduce stress and increase literacy understanding for young children.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

An interactive inservice model of developmentally appropriate instruction to be developed by educators and implemented by school administrators is a focus for future research. For inservice to have real meaning, translation of theory has to take place;

the ideas have to hold meaning for the teacher. Teachers infuse their own personalities and abilities into a reality setting and ultimately refine the methodology so that they themselves are able to provide the inservice. Using this approach, the school, then, frees itself from depending on outside persons to serve as consultants to theory, and longer-lasting results are achieved.

Burts et al. (1990a, 1990b) have shown that developmentally appropriate instruction is significantly less stressful for lower socio-economic populations. This ethnography, describing lower socio-economic children's literacy process, is offered for others to use in studying a similar population. Research, particularly ethnographic research, aimed at developmentally appropriate intervention for students from backgrounds other than low socio-economic is also a direction for the future.

Ethnographic research extends our base of knowledge concerning the early literacy experiences of students. Future research could focus on children's learning of literacy as they grow up in their own communities. In-depth descriptions of home and

community life would be relevant to children's language usage and literacy acquisition at school. Observations of parent-child interactions at home also suggest directions for future research.

Ethnography studies the social construction of reality; people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them. Since children from lower socio-economic backgrounds may have had limited experiences with books, they have to make meaning from other experiences outside of classroom storyreading to make sense of the school bookreading event. Therefore, an important direction for storyreading in the future is for the storyreader to continuously negotiate the author's meaning until the story has meaning for the child. In other words, the storyreader makes the text relevant to the children's lives.

Much of what is known about the strategies teachers can use to help children with literacy development come from observational studies with small sample sizes and has involved the long-term stay of an outsider in the classroom. Future quantitative research studies using larger samples would provide additional information.

## Epilogue

In the spring semester an informant reported the following observations: Mrs. Washington had attended four whole language workshops during the semester. A visit to Mrs. Washington's classroom revealed that following the reading of Jack and the Beanstalk, the children were drawing their own illustrations. A visit to Mrs. Johns' classroom revealed the children drawing pictures illustrating the story, Corduroy, that had just been read.

First-grade teachers were using whole language activities that had been demonstrated by the Chapter One teachers who had attended the demonstrations I had conducted for the kindergarten teachers. Finally, a change to the developmental approach for an inservice model seemed to be getting underway. The faculty had met with the model consultant and had developed a plan for implementation. A major component was having instructional consultants work with the teachers in their classrooms.

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Appendix A

Classroom Child Stress Behavior Instrument

# CLASSROOM CHILD STRESS BEHAVIOR INSTRUMENT

## Activity Codes

C=center  
 Cl=cleanup  
 DA=ditto art  
 M=group/must  
 P=punishment  
 SG=small group  
 Sh=sharing  
 St=group/story  
 T=testing  
 Tr=transition  
 W=waiting  
 WB=workbook  
 WG=whole group  
 WS=worksheet  
 O<sub>1</sub>=individual transitions  
 O<sub>2,3,4</sub>=anything else

## PASSIVE

### 1. Physically

- a. withdrawn  
(physically removing self  
from group activity, appears  
to be doing nothing)
- b. excessive fatigue  
(e.g. dozes, complains of  
tiredness)
- c. wanders aimlessly
- d. head on desk, slumping, lying  
down
- e. sitting inappropriately in  
chair
- f. standing at inappropriate  
times
- g. yawning and/or stretching

2. Facially

- a. frowning, scowling, pouting, sulking, worried look
- b. has blank, dull, vacant expression or daydreaming
- c. gazing around the room

3. Non-responsive/Negative

- a. refuses to do work, gives up
- b. ignores friendly overtures from others

4. Onlooking

(alone, stepping back from activity, watching others' activity)

ACTIVE

Self with Self

5. Automanipulation

- a. hand/hand manipulation
- b. nose picking
- c. mouth manipulation
- d. plays with/sucks hair
- e. masturbation/playing with self/exposing self
- f. ear pulling
- g. clothing manipulation (twisting, biting)
- h. scratching
- i. rubbing/picking body parts

6. Repetitive/Restricted Movement

- a. rocking
- b. repetitive leg and arm movement
- c. shuffling (repetitive foot movement while standing)
- d. facial twitches
- e. hand tremors

7. Wiggles/Squirms

8. Self Destructive

(head banging, slapping self, biting self, self name-calling)

9. Removes Self from Mainstream

- a. runs away, hiding, sneaking
- b. slump or fetal position as a means of removal

10. Physiological Reactions

- a. temper tantrums
- b. wets or soils clothes
- c. throws up
- d. cries, near tears
- e. complains of feeling sick (stomach ache)

11. Unusual Noises, Heavy Sighing

Self with Others

12. Hostile/Aggressive

- a. sassy back talk
- b. verbal hostility, disruptive
- c. bullying or threatening children



- d. physical hostility, fights, pushes
- e. argues
- f. instigating others to gang up on other children
- g. making fun of other children
- h. pulling others' hair

13. Dependency

- a. stretches and leans in order to see other students' work during specified independent work
- b. whines or asks for mother
- c. teacher attention seeking

14. Verbal Dysfunctions

- a. refuses to talk in group
- b. talking at inappropriate time
- c. nervous inappropriate laughter
- d. talks fast
- e. compulsive talking
- f. stutters

15. Touching Others at Inappropriate Times or Inappropriate Ways

Self with Object

16. Destructive

- a. destroys toys and games
- b. destroys worksheet or workbook
- c. doodling on desk

17. Nondestructive

- a. playing with object at  
inappropriate time or in  
inappropriate way
- b. doodling on paper
- c. pencil tapping
- d. clumsy or fumbling behavior
- e. sucking or biting object

Developed by Diane Burts, Craig Hart, and Rosalind Charlesworth with the assistance of Sue Hernandez, Lisa Kirk, and Jean Mosley.

Appendix B  
Teacher Demonstrations

### Teacher Demonstrations

The kindergarten teachers at Carver Elementary School are implementing a new reading series. Incorporating the use of thematic units, the series' curriculum guide focuses on the themes of community helpers and health and safety for the fall semester. Therefore, the following demonstrations are designed to incorporate bookreading strategies around these units.

#### Model for Demonstration Focusing on Community Workers

##### I. Books to be read

- a. Dr. DeSoto by John Steig
- b. Over, Under & Through by Tana Hoban

##### II. Objectives

- a. To develop language understanding of the concepts, such as "in" and "out;" "inside" and "outside."
- b. To mediate the meaning of the text between the child's understanding and the author's intended meaning.
- c. To extend the child's ideas and language experiences by writing his or her dictation.
- d. To dramatize the story to help the child learn that stories have components that must be considered in order to construct the story's meaning.

- e. To relate items in the text to the child's life.  
For example: A dentist is what kind of doctor?
- f. To broaden the child's world knowledge by  
imparting information about community workers.
- g. To promote self-esteem in the child by sharing  
high teacher-expectations for him or her.
- h. To support the child's literacy development by  
acting as if the child can do something before  
he or she can actually do it.
- i. To help the child acquire strategy of risk-  
taking; reading for the first time can be  
intimidating.
- j. To help bridge the gap from contextualized print  
to decontextualized written language.

### III. Procedure

In order to broaden the child's story-related knowledge and world knowledge, I select Dr. DeSoto by John Steig. I relate the story to their previous experiences by commenting on the fact that they have been studying important people in the community such as the fireman. I explain that doctors are important community members also and ask did they know what kind of doctor a dentist was? I share with them that I expect some of them to become dentists when they grow up. In our storybook, Dr. DeSoto is a mouse that works on the teeth of large animals. It seems that the

animals are so large that Dr. DeSoto has to crawl "inside" their mouths to do his very fine work. When he gives his patients dream juice, however, he is on the "outside" of their mouths. The children have little difficulty grasping the concepts, in and out; inside and outside. The book has large pictures of Dr. DeSoto working inside and outside the animals' mouths.

After the reading of Dr. DeSoto, I ask six children to dramatize the story. Dr. DeSoto wears glasses so that he can look inside the animals' mouths and a hammer so that he can tap on the outside of their jaws. Then, I ask six lower-ability children to act out the story.

I read the book Over, Under & Through by Tana Hoban. The book includes the following concepts: over, under, through, around, across, between, beside below, against, and behind. The book is a picture book consisting of real-life photographs, such as a polar bear "behind" bars and little girls leaning "against" a tree. As I read the book a second time, I ask the children, one-at-a-time, to read a page. Most of the children understand the concepts and can read the words. The pictures serve as context clues.

I give each child a piece of paper with a concept, such as "under," printed at the top. They are to draw a picture of or write a story about the concept. It's

important to act as if their scribbles say something. When they finish, we share the stories with each other and make a class book to display at the book center.

The following five teacher-demonstrations will continue to foster understanding about how a community works together to benefit all people; to develop interaction around print, both contextualized and decontextualized; and to draw the child's attention to print and symbols.

#### Demonstration One

##### I. Books to be read

- a. Paddy Pork/Odd Jobs by John S. Goodall
- b. Paddy Finds a Job by John S. Goodall

##### II. Objectives

- a. To help the child acquire strategy of risk-taking; reading for the first time can be intimidating.
- b. To develop language understanding such as of the concepts: "first," "next," and "last."
- c. To relate items in the text to the child's life by inviting the child to share his or her knowledge of important jobs in the community.
- d. To broaden the child's story-related knowledge by relating the book to The Three Little Pigs.

- e. To broaden the child's world knowledge by relating jobs in the storybook to jobs in the community.
- f. To monitor the child's understanding by asking questions that require critical thinking questions as well as literal types of questions.
- g. To secure the child's interest and trust by selecting a short, simple, yet cleverly written, wordless picture book.

### III. Procedure

I show the cover of Paddy Pork/Odd Jobs, a wordless picture book, and relate to the children that we have seen how the three little pigs helped each other in their community. We discuss how important it is to help each other in our classroom community. We also discuss that in our community there are many jobs and that this is the story of a pig that wants a job. The children soon see that Paddy Pork is a silly pig who does not think and fails, therefore, to get a job. Each picture poses a problem that requires the children to think critically in order to predict the outcome. On every other page is a half page that when opened reveals what actually happens.

At the end of the story, I encourage the children to name all the jobs Paddy wanted. If necessary, I show the pictures to provide clues. We go back through



the book to try to name the jobs in the order that they occurred.

Then I announce that the name of our next book is Paddy Finds a Job! The purpose for this selection is to learn to retell the story and to develop an understanding for the concepts: first, next, and last. Paddy Pig wants to be a waiter, and I help them to understand what a restaurant is. I explain that this is a fancy restaurant--that the restaurant owner wears a suit. Even to become a waiter, Paddy has to wear a bow-tie.

In the beginning of the story, Paddy gets to wait on an important couple--Mrs. Dog and Mr. Wolf. In taking drinks to the couple's table, Paddy's feet get caught in Mrs. Dog's fur wrap. When he turns to leave, he trips and drags Mrs. Dog with him into the dessert cart (explain the term dessert cart). Mr. Wolf, furious, jumps up and chases Paddy through the kitchen and out the back door of the restaurant.

I review with the children what happens first (Paddy gets to be a waiter), next (Paddy waits on a fancy couple), next (Paddy trips on Mrs. Dog's fur), and next (Mr. Wolf chases him out of the restaurant), and last (Paddy loses his job). Then I let a child take the book and share the story with the group.

(Since this is a wordless picture book, the child thinks he/she is reading.)

In order to reinforce the concept of first, second, and last, I ask several children to dramatize the story. I have a fake fur for Mrs. Dog, a vest for the owner, a coat for Mr. Wolf, an apron for the chef, and a bow-tie and tray with cups for Paddy. The children cover the story's events. I let the rest of the class act out the story again. Drama is an excellent activity for helping lower-ability students grasp the idea of sequencing.

#### Demonstration Two

##### I. Books to be read

- a. The P Family by Mary Jane Everett
- b. Pumpkin Man by Mary Jane Everett

##### II. Objectives

- a. To help children discover that print on a sign, a label, or in a book has something to say to them.
- b. To call attention to the "p" and "w" sounds.
- c. To sequence story events on a "story clothesline."
- d. To help bridge the gap from contextualized to decontextualized print.
- e. To foster development of small motor control through coloring.

### III. Procedure

One of the objectives in selecting The P Family is to call attention to the "p" and "w" sounds. I discuss with the children that this is the month of October--the month of pumpkins and Halloween. Then, I write the letter "p" on the board and explain that it makes a puffing sound. I read the children a Halloween story about the P family. Each family member's name begins with the letter "p", and I encourage them to say the names with me. Grandfather Pa decides to pick a pumpkin from the pumpkin patch. He puts a candle in it and places the pumpkin on the porch. He gives popsicles to the trick-or-treaters. When it's time to blow out the candle, Grandfather Pa makes the "w" sound; but the flame doesn't go out. Grandmother Pearl, Daddy Paul, and Mama Paula all try without success because they are making the wrong sound. At last, Baby Paddy goes "puff," and blows out the candle. The children, then, make the "p" sound with me.

I begin to read the next book, Pumpkin Man. First, I engage the children's interest in the story. We get to the page where the old woman meets a pair of shoes; the shoes say, "pump, pump." I encourage the children to say "pump, pump" also. Then, the old woman meets a pair of pants that go "push, push;" (We all say "push, push.") Then she meets a shirt that goes

"wiggle, wiggle (to distinguish the "w" sound from the "p" sound); a pair of gloves that go "pat, pat;" and a hat that goes "pom, pom." Finally, she meets the pumpkin man who says, "Boo!"

In order to develop sequencing, we dramatize the story. "Now, what happens first?" I ask. As the children decide what happens first, next, and last, they rehearse their parts; and we put the play together.

Children select their favorite event (or picture) from the story to draw and/or color; they work together in small groups. After coloring, the children sequence their pictures on a "clothesline," which is a piece of rope strung across the room, and retell the story.

### Demonstration Three

#### I. Books to be read

- a. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin
- b. Pancakes for Breakfast by Tomie dePaola

#### II. Objectives

- a. To segment written language into smaller chunks (i.e., to search for ways that parts of what the child hears can fit with the parts they notice in written texts).
- b. To develop written language meaning by expanding the child's world knowledge.

- c. To develop written language awareness by making a list and a class book.
- d. To memorize portions of the text--to use written language without reference to the immediate situation.
- e. To interact around print--contextualized and decontextualized.
- f. To acquire the strategy of risk-taking; reading, at first, can be intimidating.
- g. To reinforce the sound of the letter "p."
- h. To build self-esteem by sharing high expectations for the child with the child.

### III. Procedure

In introducing the pattern book--Brown Bear, Brown Bear--I inform the class of the author's name. I tell them that I expect them to be authors, that authors are writers, and that we are going to write our own story today.

I begin the book by saying, "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, what do you see? I see a ----" (turning page). Children say "red bird;" and I finish the sentence: "looking at me." This language pattern is prevalent throughout the book, and the children catch on quickly. The final pages end with pictures of all the animals, and we say them together. We read the book again; with the book closed, we try to name all the animals.

As a child recalls an animal, I write the words ("red bird," for example) on a chart and call attention to the print. Using the chart, we tell the story once more. Two of the animals are "purple cat" and "white dog." I call special attention to the "p" and the "w" sounds; I ask if they can think of other animals that begin with the letter p that we could add to our list. They think of "pig" and "porcupine." Then I let them suggest any word they know that begins with the letter "p." They come forth with "pickle," "peanut butter," "popcorn," "pie," "pencil," "policeman," "pumpkin," and "paper." I write the words, and we say them together.

Children move to their tables to make the class book. I ask each child what animal he or she would like to draw and give the child a sheet with those words ("yellow duck," for example) printed at the top. I read the words with the child and make sure that he or she has chosen the appropriate color that is needed. As the children finish, they get to go to the book display of wordless picture books and choose one to read silently and then, to the class. (John Goodall has written a series of Paddy Pork picture books which I have on display.)

I staple the sheets together to make our own Brown Bear book and print each child's name on the cover. Then we read the book as a group. I choose one of the

children's picture books, Pancakes for Breakfast, and read this book to the class. I ask the child who had that book if he or she would like to read it to the class. I encourage the reading and assist when necessary.

I praise the children for their behavior during bookreading time, for listening to each other, and for helping each other at their tables. I tell them that after recess we are going to listen to more children read while we sip Pepsi.

#### Demonstration Four

##### I. Books to be read

- a. The Chocolate Chip Cookie by Mary Jane Everett
- b. Round, Round, and Round by Tana Hoban
- c. Campbell Kids' Cookbook by Campbell Soup

##### II. Objectives

- a. To build on the child's natural ability to tell stories.
- b. To learn through interaction how to ask questions about the story.
- c. Through drama, to integrate bookreading with math, geometry, and science.
- d. To recognize words and word patterns.
- e. To encourage the use of inventive spelling.
- f. To learn through bookreading interactions the social skill of turn-taking.

- g. To learn through interactions how to make conversation.
- h. Through environmental print, to learn the function of print through direct experience.

### III. Procedure

Several books on shapes are scattered on a table located in the middle of the room. (Tana Hoban has written many appropriate shape books for kindergartners.) As I await the teachers' arrival, I observe which children select books and browse through them. After everyone is settled, I tell them that we are going to read a book about the circle called The Chocolate Chip Cookie. I relate the concept of the text to their life experiences through a discussion of round cookies. I inform the children that they are in for a special treat today as the author is here with us and will read the book with them.

Ms. Everett reads The Chocolate Chip Cookie to the class; and afterwards, they act out the story. She tells them how much fun and how important it is to be an author and that she expects them to be authors. She says that when you read books and listen to stories, you get ideas. She shares with the children how she began to write stories when she was in kindergarten. She said that sometimes she didn't like the way a story ended, especially if it were a sad or scary story, and



that she would make up her own ending. For example, since she was afraid of the witch in Snow White, she drew an angel instead. She tells them that she is going to read another book about circles (Round, Round, and Round), that this book is about a lot of things that are in the shape of a circle, and that they will get an idea for their own story.

After the children are seated at their tables, she and I help them decide what circular objects they want to draw. In helping them to label their drawings, we encourage the use of inventive spelling; we assist them in writing the word.

After the drawings are collected and a class book is made, I display the ingredients and utensils for making chocolate chip cookies but point out that we need a recipe--directions to follow. I show them the Campbell Kids' Cookbook, and we discuss its purpose. I write the ingredients on a chart. In the making of the cookies, the children learn how to measure the ingredients (math), how to mold the dough into circles (geometry), and the effects of heat on the hardness and softness of the dough (science). We decorate the finished product with different colors of M and M's.

## Demonstration Five

### I. Books to be read

- a. Frog Goes to Dinner by Mercer Mayer
- b. Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin

### II. Objectives

- a. To promote self-esteem among children by sharing high teacher-expectations for them.
- b. To support children's literacy development by acting as if they can do something before they can actually do it.
- c. To help children acquire strategy of risk-taking; reading for the first time can be intimidating.
- d. To help make the link from contextualized print to decontextualized print.
- e. To segment written language into smaller chunk (i.e., to search for ways that parts of what children hear read can fit with the parts they notice in written texts).
- f. To memorize portions of the text--to use written language without reference to the immediate situation.
- g. To recognize words and word patterns.
- h. To use letters and letter-sounds as cues to recognizing words and word patterns.

### III. Procedure

I wanted to know if the children could make the transfer from recognizing a word such as "purple" in its familiar context, "purple cat," to recognizing it in a new context such as "purple grape." (Purple cat is one of the fanciful characters in Brown Bear.) So, I made a menu of the restaurant they love most, designed it around Scott-Foresman's theme of Thanksgiving foods, and called it "Thanksgiving at McDonald's."

First, I read Frog Goes to Dinner by Mercer Mayer. The children delight in this fantasy tale about a frog who, after doing all the wrong things in a restaurant, learns the importance of good manners. I give each child a menu that lists various foods such as "yellow corn," "red jello," and "white cake." We play "restaurant" and order foods from the menu. I then let the children choose a center in which he or she would like to work. The centers have been set up much like a real restaurant: a dining center where children order from the menu; the housekeeping center where the food is prepared; the water center, actually a large tub of styrofoam, where the dishes are washed; and the book center where small groups of children take turns reading their menus. It is at this last center that I have a mini-tape recorder with the microphone so that I

can distinguish those children who have made the transfer from contextualized print to decontextualized print. In the menu, the child is presented with one of the words such as "purple," paired with "grape" instead of the associated, "cat," to determine if the child can recognize the word in another context.

Appendix C  
Coding Categories

Coding CategoriesA - Teacher's modeling of teacher-demonstrations

- A1 Storybook reading
- A2 Asking questions
- A3 Inviting child to reenact stories
- A4 Asking child to retell stories
- A5 Relating text to child's life
- A6 Relating child's experiences to text
- A7 Mediating text/explaining the author's message
- A8 Clarifying concepts
- A9 Printing stories (or words) on charts
- A10 Making books
- A11 Encouraging children to use sentences
- A12 Praising children's efforts

B - Children's acquisition of literacy skills

- B1 Bookhandling skills
- B2 Reenacting stories
- B3 Retelling stories
- B4 Recognizing sounds
- B5 Recognizing letters
- B6 Memorizing text language
- B7 Recognizing words in context
- B8 Recognizing words out of context (reading)
- B9 Reading to others
- B10 Teaching literacy skills to others
- B11 Answering questions

C - Children's display of stressful symptoms

- C1 Boredom/yawning
- C2 Lying down
- C3 Rolling on stomach
- C4 Talking disruptively
- C5 Gazing aimlessly
- C6 Playing with body parts
- C7 Playing with clothing
- C8 Hitting others
- C9 Crying
- C10 Fussing
- C11 Pouting
- C12 Withdrawing/refusing to talk
- C13 Wandering about classroom
- C14 Taking belongings from others
- C15 Tearing up work
- C16 Looking at others' work

D - Teacher's use of teaching practices

- D1 Ability-level grouping
- D2 Seating arrangement of children for whole-class instruction
- D3 Use of workbooks and worksheets
- D4 Use of centers
- D5 Use of time devoted to teacher-directed activities
- D6 Lecturing, explaining, directing
- D7 Children directly involved in lesson activity

E - Teacher's use of developmentally inappropriate practices of rote learning and drill

- E1 Recognizing a single letter
- E2 Tracing a single letter
- E3 Reciting alphabet
- E4 Reciting numbers
- E5 Reciting days of week
- E6 Reciting months of year
- E7 Coloring within predefined lines

F - Teacher's use of behavior

- F1 Negative feedback/demeaning children
- F2 Positive feedback/modeling expected behaviors
- F3 Misuse of praise/social comparisons
- F4 Isolating children
- F5 Demonstrating nurturance
- F6 Demonstrating affection
- F7 Demonstrating acceptance
- F8 Demonstrating understanding
- F9 Handling stressful events calmly



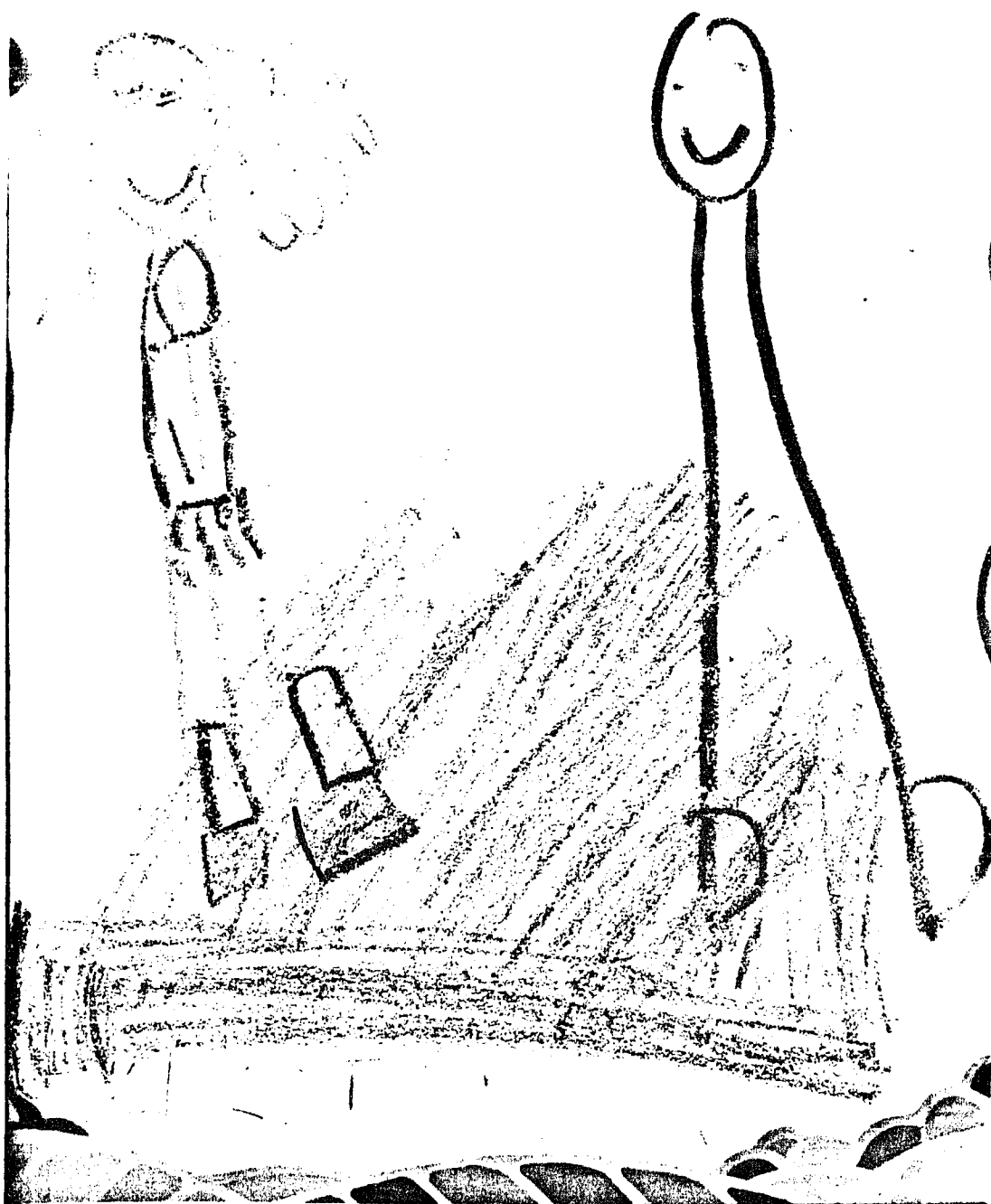
Appendix D  
Participant-Construct Instrument

Jason

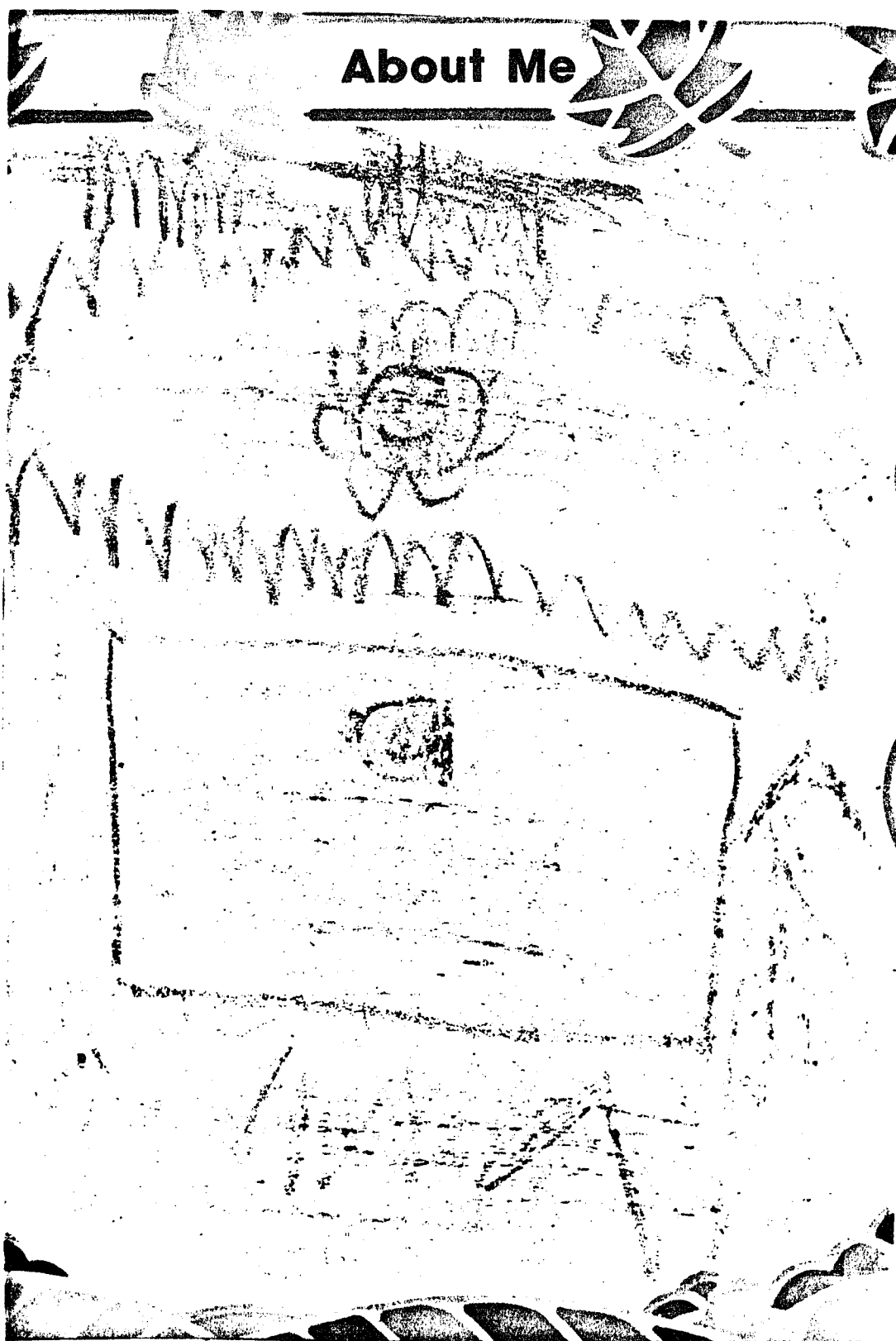


About Me

# About Me

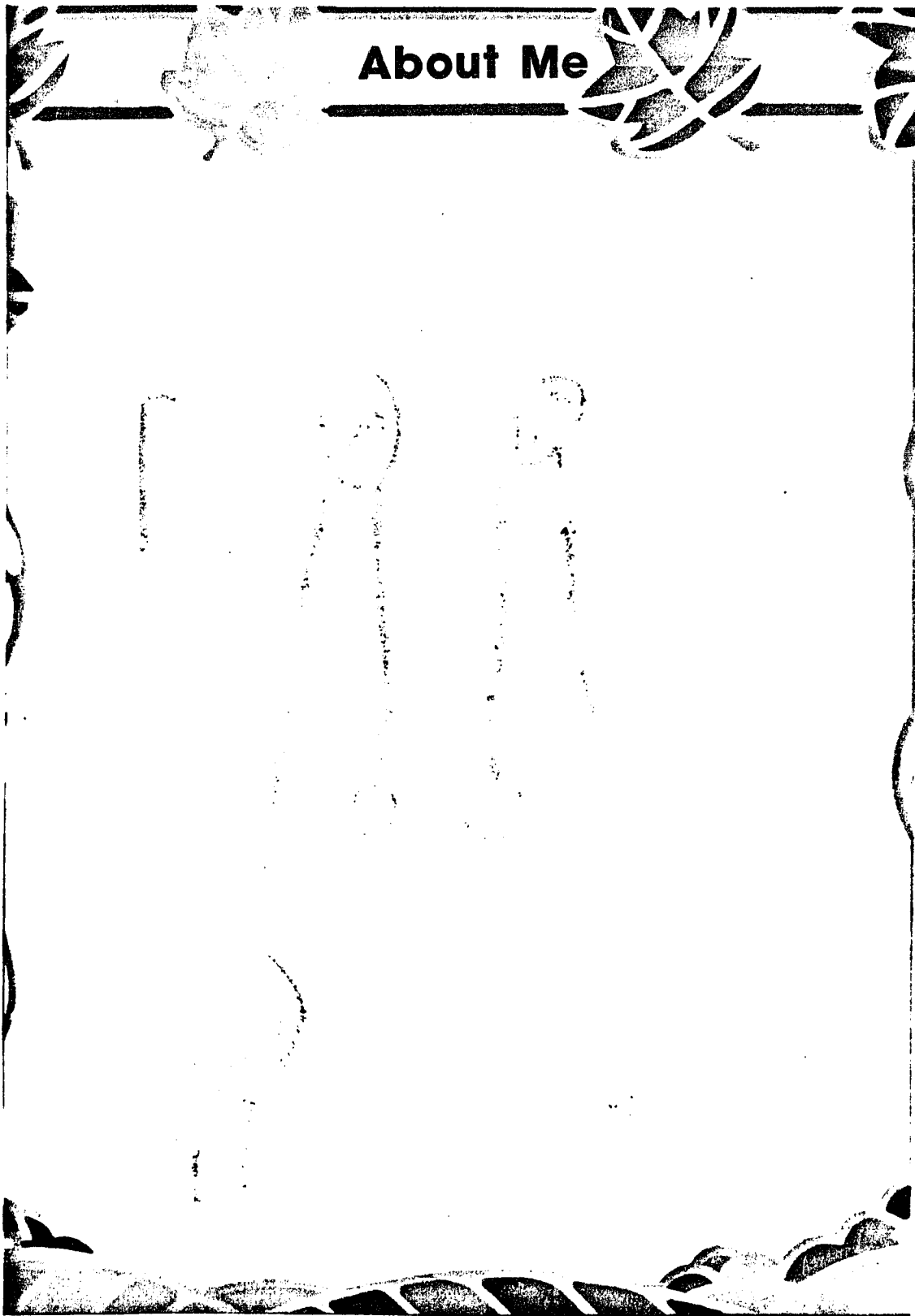


Shalindra



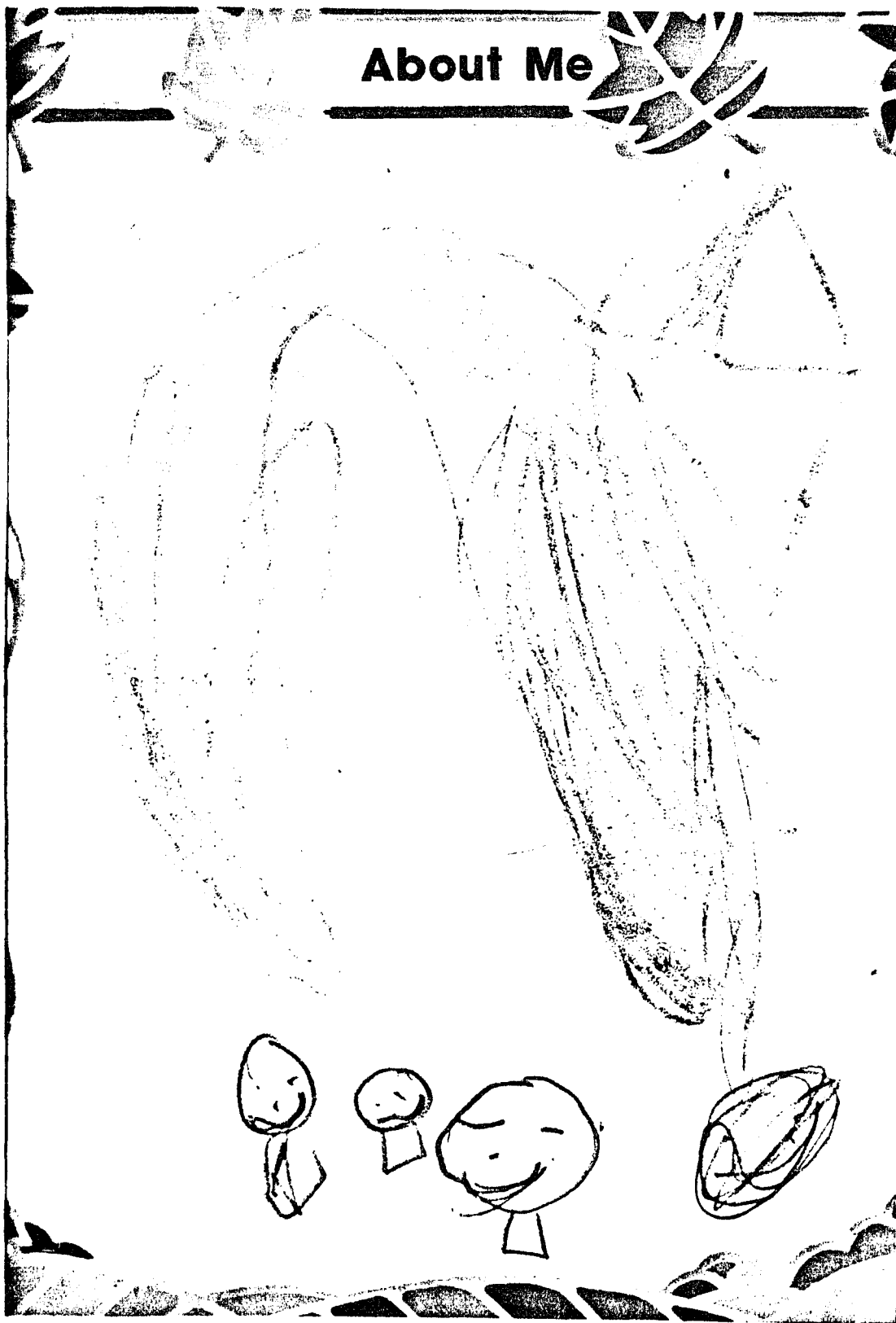
Tiffany

## About Me



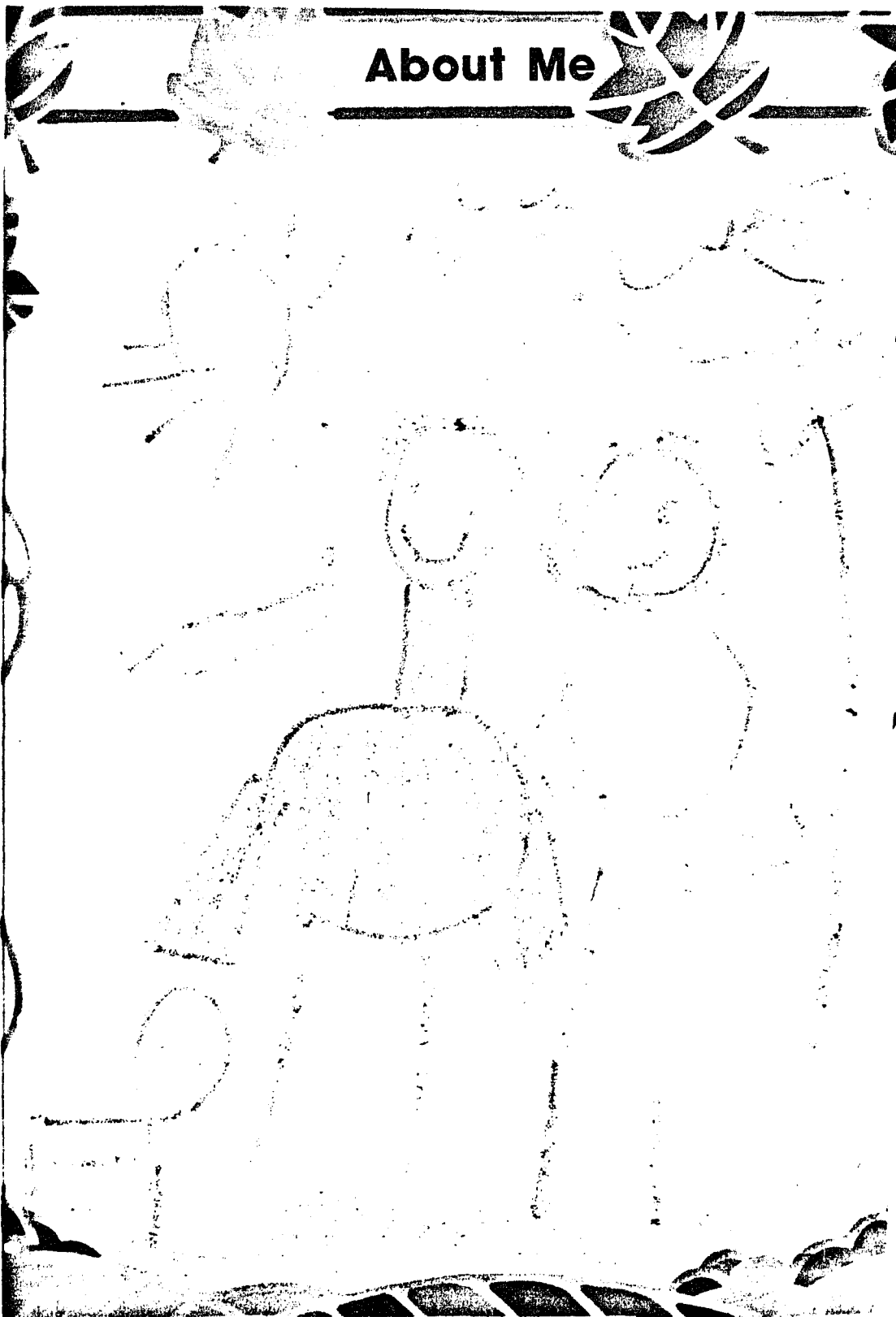
Michael

# About Me



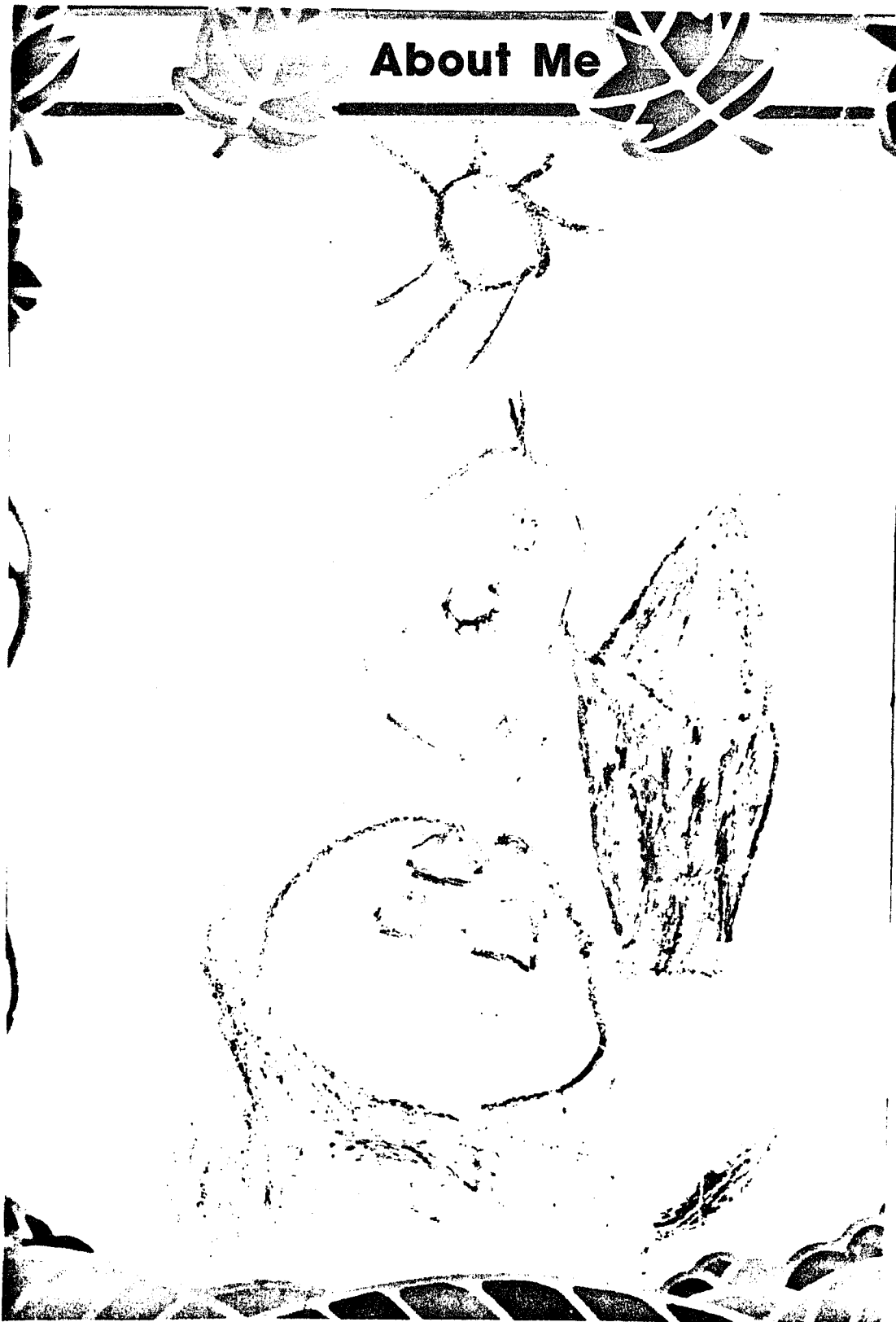
Katie

## About Me



Patrick

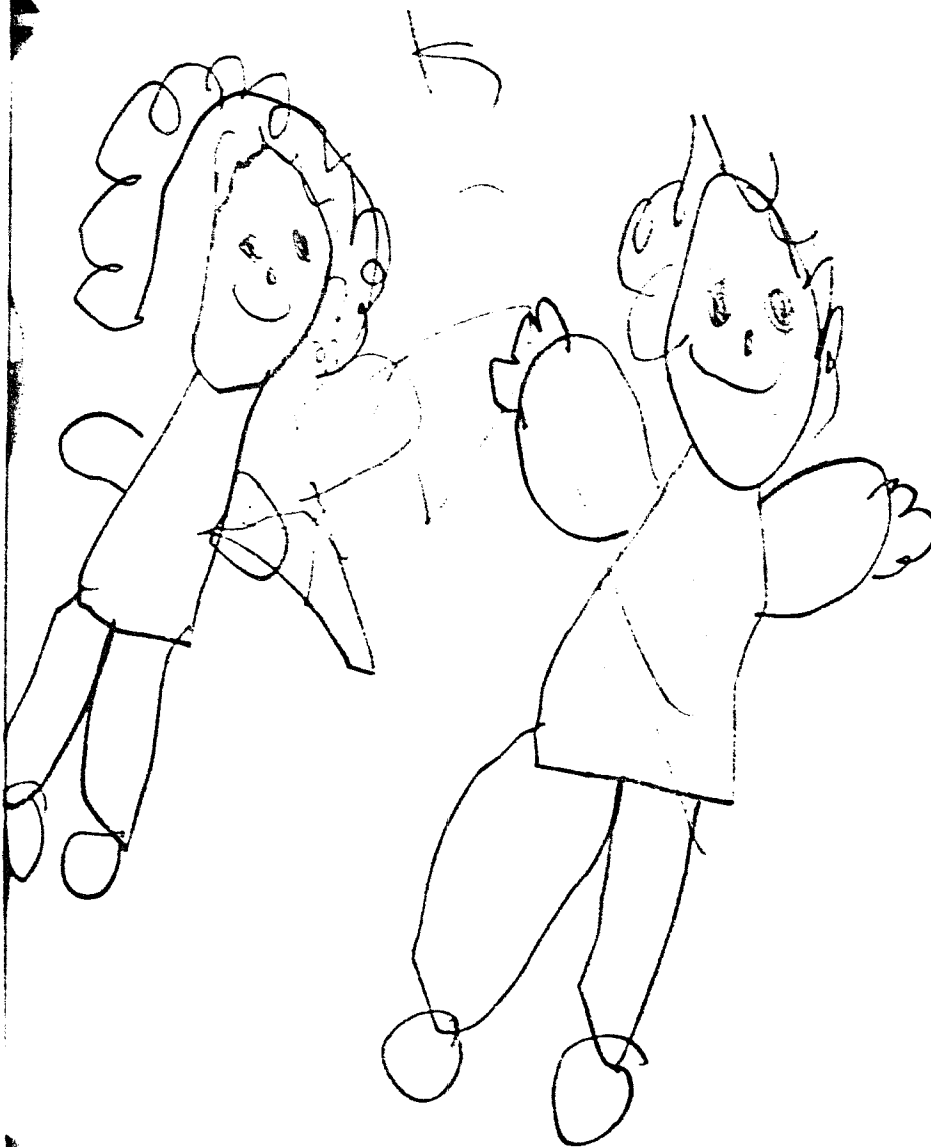
## About Me



Tykesha



## About Me



Darilyn

## Curriculum Vitae

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**Office: (504) 388-6746**

## **EDUCATION**

- |             |  |                               |
|-------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Ph.D., 1991 | Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA<br>Major: Curriculum and Instruction: Reading<br>Minor: Counseling | GPA: Major 3.8<br>Overall 3.8 |
| M.A., 1986  | Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA<br>Major: Counseling<br>Minor: Education Administration            |                               |
| B.S., 1967  | Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA<br>Major: Elementary Education<br>Minor: French                    |                               |

## **WORK EXPERIENCE**

- 1990      Education/Remediation Specialist: College of Business Administration,  
Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Work with JTPA State and Local SDA Staff and subcontractors to evaluate and improve Basic Skills Training and Remediation component JTPA funded programs. Serve as instructor in courses with education/remediation emphasis. Develop and improve curriculum for Basic Skills training with special emphasis on adult remediation needs. Survey national and local JTPA education programs to identify what techniques work well.

- 1990      Assisted Professor in Prescriptive Reading Curriculum: Administrative  
Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Assisted with instruction (EDCI 7683) to graduate-level students to plan developmentally appropriate reading curricula for elementary students after diagnosis of reading skills.

Supervisor for Students' Field Experience: Administrative Graduate  
Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Supervised on site and evaluated university students' teaching reading in the elementary classrooms in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. Conferred with each student to offer ideas in appropriate instructional strategies to create an optimal learning environment.

1989            Supervisor for Certification of Teachers: Administrative Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Supervised and evaluated teachers on site for certification requirements in secondary education in East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge, West Feliciana, and Livingston Parishes.

Conducted Dissertation Research: Doctoral Student in Curriculum and Instruction, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Collaborated with administrators and teachers at Dalton Elementary School, a lower socio-economic minority school, in developing dissertation research. Planned and conducted inservice training for teachers to assist students with acquisition of literacy skills in ways that create less stress by implementing effective storybook reading strategies.

1988-1989    Director of "Parents as Partners in Reading" Program: Administrative Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Assisted with development and implementation of project to recruit parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds to participate with their children in the literacy event of storybook reading. When previous director left, assumed all responsibilities. Worked directly with parents who had little or no high school education and few reading skills. Served as the liaison with teachers, the principal, community leaders, and school board officials of West Ascension Parish. The program received national recognition on CBS's "60 minutes" and in the ABC documentary, as well as the on site participation of the State Superintendent of Education and the State Literacy Chairman, Patti Roemer.

1988            Supervisor for Student Teachers: Administrative Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Supervised on site and evaluated university student teachers in reading and language arts in East Baton Rouge and West Baton Rouge Parishes. Conferred with teachers to ascertain student's progress and student needs.

1987-1988    Developmental Reading: Teaching Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.

Taught developmental reading to college students. Assisted students with reading and writing skills and basic study skills. Provided students with comprehension strategies for college content courses. Carried out programs for students to maintain achievement and adjustment in their college curriculum. Tutored students individually in reading and writing.

1986-1987     Instructor/Counselor: Special Services, University of Southwestern Louisiana, Lafayette, LA

Instructor/Counselor for developmental students entering college through Special Services, a federally funded program for minority students. Provided necessary support so that students could acquire the education and skills to qualify for employment. Provided career development through remedial courses. Taught Study Skills, a developmental course stressing reading, math, writing skills and study skills such as time management, note-taking, test anxiety, and goal setting. Counseled students facing stress, academic pressures and adjustments; emotional disturbances; behavioral problems and personal problems. Using statistical analysis assessed students' aptitudes and interests in planning academic schedules. Also targeted curricula for stress reduction.

1985-1986     Counselor for International Students: Fall Internship (20 hours weekly); Spring Practicum (20 hours weekly), Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Counseled minority students facing academic pressures and adjustments, social vulnerabilities, and personal problems. Assisted in the administration of orientation; planned and approved students' schedules in accordance with university regulations. Assisted the Director in all aspects of the International Student Office. Tutored students in reading and writing. Worked with admissions to assist transfer and re-entry students.

1986            Career Planning and Placement Center: Administration Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Assisted with job placement through individual and group counseling and testing services. Provided students with vocational guidance. Collected and organized occupational and economic information to aid students in making and carrying out vocational decisions. Assisted in working with employers of local companies to meet with and interview students. Responsible for the interview schedule room; supervisor for student workers.

1984-1985     Junior Division: Teaching Graduate Assistant, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Taught Study Skills (JD 0003), a basic remedial course, to incoming college freshmen. Course included techniques in essential study skills, such as time management, note-taking, text anxiety, and goal-setting. Course was designed for students to teach themselves with appropriate guidance as opposed to lecture-based techniques. Assisted students with reading, math, and writing skills. Counseled students individually for work roles in the future.

1984      Pre-Enrollment Counselor: Junior Division, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA

Counseled in-coming freshmen and transfer students individually to provide information relative to test data and scholastic requirements. Studied course prerequisites and test results to establish students' eligibility for honors courses and/or needs for developmental courses. Planned and approved academic schedules in accordance with university regulations as well as students' needs and interests. Tested students for remedial courses in reading and math.

1983      Business Representative: Rapides General Hospital, Alexandria, LA

Greeted new arrivals and assisted them with insurance verification. Acquainted patients with hospital facilities and encouraged them to participate in group activities. Assisted in resolving patients' complaints relating to financial and insurance concerns. Directed group activities and created friendly atmosphere for patients.

1982      Manager: Nutri/System Weight Loss Center, Alexandria, LA

Promoted center to the community. Directed public relations and coordinated all advertising. Sold the program to clients. Conferred with office and administrative staff to plan weight-loss programs to meet clients' needs. Counseled overweight clients. Provided individual and group therapy.

1980-1981      Kindergarten through Eighth Grade Physical Education Teacher: Alexandria Country Day School, Alexandria, LA

1979-1980      Fourth-Grade Teacher: Mabel Brasher Elementary School, Alexandria, LA

1967-1969      Second-Grade Teacher: Highland Elementary School, Baton Rouge, LA

## RESEARCH AND PRESENTATIONS

Weems, N., Charlesworth, R., and Richardson, M. (1991, April).

Growing in literacy: An ethnographic study of the introduction of storybook sharing in kindergarten. Submitted for presentation at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association, Chicago, IL.

Collins, M., Everett, M., Weems, N., and Carlson, D. (1990, May). Adults, books, and cooperation for little language learners. Presented at the annual meeting of the International Reading Association, Atlanta, GA.

Arceneaux, L., Cothorn, N., Dean, R., Everett, J., Jampole, E., Mitchell, M., Penn, L., and Weems, N. (1989, May). Reading instruction in science: what descriptive research reveals about classroom practices and teacher/student perceptions. Presented at the Louisiana Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

McGee, L., Edwards, P., and Weems, N. (1988, November). Interactions in parent-child environmental print reading events. Presented at the National Reading Conference, Tucson, AZ.

Edwards, P., Weems, N., Jampole, E., and McGee, L., (1988, November). Lower-SES mothers' learning of bookreading strategies. Presented at the National Reading Conference, Tucson, AZ.

Weems, N., and Everett, J. (1988, October). The effects of various modes of role play on story reconstruction. Presented at the Southwestern Regional International Reading Association, Little Rock, AK.

Edwards, P., and Weems, N. (1988, May). Communicating with diverse parent populations: ideas that work. Presented at the International Reading Association, Toronto, Canada.

#### COMMUNITY SERVICE

1978      Senior High Activities Director: First United Methodist Church, Alexandria, LA

Ascertained interests of age groups twelve through eighteen and evaluated available equipment and facilities to plan activities, such as retreats, tournaments, outings, and trips. Arranged for activity requirements, such as setting up equipment, transportation, refreshments, and chaperons. Worked with parents and church personnel.

1977      Fund Raiser (nonprofit organization), Alexandria, LA

Chaired the entire section of the 1984 World's Fair feature cookbook: Louisiana Entertains.

1975      Political Fund Raiser (nonprofit organization) U.S. Representative Campaign Headquarters, Alexandria LA

Contacted individuals and firms in person to solicit funds for campaign contributions. Planned, organized, and directed benefits for campaign.

1974      Fund Raiser (nonprofit organization), Alexandria, LA

Planned, organized, and directed benefit and style show for Rapides Symphony Orchestra. Wrote press releases and enacted T.V. spots to promote fund-raiser to the community.

#### **CIVIC AWARDS AND HONORS**

State Public Affairs committee, Treasurer; Rapides Symphony Guild, President; Central Louisiana Art Association, President.

#### **HOBBIES AND INTERESTS**

Cooking; writing; certified aerobics instructor; modeling; interior design.

**REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**



# DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

Candidate: Nancy Crossland Weems

Major Field: Education

Title of Dissertation: An Ethnographic Study of Kindergarten Children's Literacy Skills and Stress-Related Behaviors Before and After Teacher-Demonstration.

Approved:

Basilinda Charlesworth  
Major Professor and Chairman

H. Kern

Dean of the Graduate School

## EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Joseph C. Woot

Donna L. Mealey

Miller Richardson

Thomas W. Davis

Earl H. Chubb

Deane C. Burt

Date of Examination: